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The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDITION | THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2026

When 'blame Canada' was merely a joke

Chrystia Freeland

OPINION

Blaming Canada used to be such a fantastical idea that it was a joke. A couple of decades ago, "South Park" imagined a campaign against Canada for fabricated offenses (in this case, children who swear) as a satirical device whose obvious impossibility was meant to underscore the pathetic human tendency to point fingers at someone — anyone — else for our own failings.

Yet here we are, with the actual president of the United States, well into his second term, blaming Canada for pretty much everything. The "South Park" movie culminates in a war between Canada and the United States. For now, in the real world, the battlefield is economic, with President Trump threatening to impose tariffs on some $20 billion of Canadian exports, ranging from hockey sticks to cement.

Trump's tariff offensive has a clear purpose: to demonstrate who is dominant and who must submit.

The official pretext is unfair Canadian treatment of U.S. booze, dairy and cars.

That's just the most recent rationale. Earlier in July, Canada's cited crime was being ravaged by the dangerous fires in our own boreal forest. Before that, Canada was considered a national security threat, and therefore subject to tariffs on our steel, aluminum, car parts and cars.

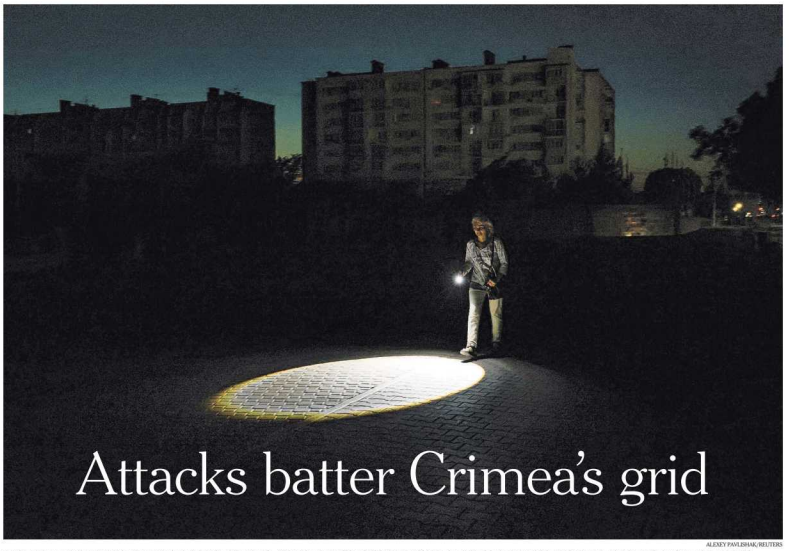
What makes this new attack on Canada truly absurd is that it runs counter to the United States' own economic interests. American workers can, with some justification, complain about China's self-aggrandizing trade policies, and it's true that the downward pressure on wages in competing countries could lower labor and environmental standards.

But America's trade relationship with its northern neighbor is very strong, and mutually beneficial. The Trump White House knows that, because commerce between the two countries is governed by a trade agreement negotiated during the first Trump administration and lauded by the president himself as "the best trade deal ever." Even politicians who were lifelong critics of free trade and opponents of Mr. Trump's backed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. In fact, the U.S.M.C.A. was the first and only trade deal Sherrod Brown, the trade skeptic and former senator from Ohio (now running again), ever supported.

Mr. Brown was right to do so. The

FREELAND, PAGE 10

The New York Times publishes opinion from a wide range of perspectives in hopes of promoting constructive debate about consequential questions.



Attacks batter Crimea's grid

ALEXEY PAVLISHAK/REUTERS

A temporary power outage in Yevpatoriya, Crimea, this month. "Power went off and didn't come back on, even for an hour," for 15 days, one resident of northern Crimea said.

BY NATALIYA VASILYEVA

Dry faucets, shuttered storefronts, pitch-black homes and residents camping outside City Hall to charge their devices.

A Ukrainian drone campaign against Crimea's power grid has left hundreds of thousands of people in the Russia-held territory without electricity for days at a time.

"Power went off and didn't come back on, even for an hour," for 15 days, said Olga, who lives with her husband and their baby in northern Crimea. They often had no running water, either. "Authorities have forgotten about us, that's clear to see," she said by telephone.

Like others interviewed for this article, she asked that her last name be withheld for safety reasons.

The attack on energy infrastructure in Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula that Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014, mirrors the much larger, yearslong Russian aerial assault on Ukraine's civilian energy systems, which leaves millions of Ukrainians without light or heat each winter.

Battering Crimea's grid, like the Ukrainian strikes against oil refineries that have created fuel shortages in Russia, was meant to raise pressure on the Kremlin to negotiate a peace deal. But President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia has not publicly acknowledged the blackouts.

The intensive Ukrainian campaign began in June, mostly aimed at infrastructure near Russian military bases in northern Crimea, which borders Ukrainian lands occupied by Russia since its 2022 full-scale invasion. By late July, every major town and village in the north of the peninsula had suffered full blackouts.

But unpredictable, hourslong cuts are reported across the peninsula. Every municipality has been affected, even in touristy southern Crimea. Blackouts have idled water pumps, and even in less affected areas like Yalta, a southern resort city, residents say running water comes on only for three hours a day.

Crimean officials have not publicized the extent of the blackouts, merely assuring residents that they were working on it. But a top Russian diplomat told the state-owned Tass news agency that in a single week, Ukrainian strikes had cut power to the homes of 1.4 million Crimeans, out of a prewar population of 2.5 million.

Nighttime illumination across Crimea fell to less than 20 percent of normal in early July, according to an analysis of satellite images by Meduza, a Russian-language news outlet.

"There's an understanding that this is not just for a day or two," said Rustem, a hairdresser from central Crimea. He said people were trying to get generators, solar panels and power converters.

Locals are also "beginning to think if it's time to leave, and if so, where to," he added.

Families have struggled to stay in touch with their loved ones in the north, where power cuts have crippled cellphone reception. The authorities in the resort town of Yevpatoriya last week said they had installed pay phones, artifacts of another era.

Already rattled by severe gasoline shortages, some tourists and Crimeans chose to leave the peninsula earlier this summer.

But most are staying. Olga, the woman who lives with her husband and baby in northern Crimea, settled in the town of Dzhankoi in 2021, and does not think she is up for another big move.

Dzhankoi was first plunged into darkness at the end of June, but power was soon partly restored. A week later, Ukrainian strikes hit two local power substations, causing the 15-day blackout. Last week, residents started getting two hours of electricity a day, but at a high voltage that could be dangerous for appliances.

CRIMEA, PAGE 2

Intensive Ukrainian drone campaign leaves Russia-held territory without power or water

VALENTYN OGIRENKO/REUTERS

Ukrainian soldiers preparing a drone for flight. Kyiv's campaign to bring the war home to ordinary Russians is meant to pressure the Kremlin to negotiate a peace deal.

In Yemen, Saudis may be cornered by Houthis

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

The militant group seeks to extract concessions by pressuring oil exports

BY VIVIAN NEREIM AND SHUAIB ALMOSAWA

After four years of political deadlock in Yemen, the Houthis were growing increasingly frustrated. A truce between the Iranian-backed militia and neighboring Saudi Arabia had turned into a brittle stalemate, and the Houthis, feeling they had little to lose, wanted greater authority over Yemen and its oil resources.

Saudi officials, for their part, had no interest in another clash with the Houthis. Their previous bombing campaign in Yemen had turned into a decade-long quagmire that contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Yemenis from violence, hunger and disease. They wanted to avoid another expensive conflict that could endanger their plans to transform the kingdom into a business and tourism hub.

Into this tinderbox, the U.S. war with Iran flung a spark. Over the past few weeks, the Houthis and Saudi Arabia have spiraled into new clashes that risk expanding into another full-blown war.

"The Houthis have one solution for every problem in the world, which is go to war," said Farea al-Muslimi, a Yemen-focused fellow at the London-based research group Chatham House. "The Saudis solve every problem by trying to shower it with money," he added, "and the Houthis by shooting at it."

The last Saudi-Houthi war pushed Yemen to the brink of famine, until it paused with a fragile truce in 2022. By then, the Houthis had created a de facto state in northern Yemen, and the south was nominally controlled by Yemen's internationally recognized government, which is financially and militarily dependent on Saudi Arabia. Talks toward a durable peace deal eventually stalled.

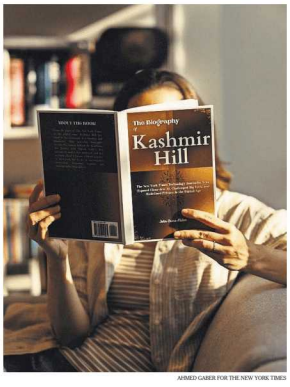
The limbo was never going to last, but Saudi Arabia, distracted by other crises, appeared to hope it would hold a bit longer.

The Saudi ambassador to Yemen, Mohammed al-Jaber, said in a social media post on Saturday that the kingdom was keen to de-escalate. He blamed the Houthis for "insisting on a path of escalation and violence" and accused them of serving foreign agendas in an apparent reference to Iran.

But the battle-hardened Houthis may think they have much to gain from a new confrontation with Saudi Arabia, including access to Yemeni oil revenue and greater authority over the country, according to officials and diplomats who have dealt with the militia.

"Our souls are content with any level of sacrifice," Abdulmalik al-Houthi, the

YEMEN, PAGE 4



AHMED GABER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Kashmir Hill, a technology reporter for The New York Times, reading her unauthorized biography, one of 10 that "John Crane Miller" had published in a single week.

My life story, as told by an A.I. chatbot

Biography of journalist is among thousands of books polluting Amazon

BY KASHMIR HILL

Recently, I received a strange text from a new acquaintance. "You have your own biography???" it read. "How did you neglect to tell me this?"

This was news to me. I went to Amazon to investigate. There it was. A biography of Kashmir Hill — title: "The Biography of Kashmir Hill" — had been released nearly a year earlier, in August 2025. My life story had a mottled brown cover and a publisher I'd never heard of before. It had no reviews until I wrote one, asking, as the subject of this work, if I could please speak to the author.

My biography is 90 pages long and should be shorter. It combines facts about me that are widely available on the internet, such as where I grew up, with generic insights that could be true of anyone, like a horoscope spread over dozens of pages. "You cannot understand Kashmir Hill without understanding her contradictions," my biographer wrote.

The book is flattering, fabricated and absolutely packed with em dashes. It bears all the signs of A.I. slop. I clicked on the author, one John Crane Miller. His bio page described him as a "seasoned biographer and cultural analyst," and his portrait was a widely used stock photo of a white man in a suit. "The Biography of Kashmir Hill: The New York Times Technology Journalist Who Exposed Clearview AI, Challenged Big Tech and Redefined Privacy in the Digital Age" was one of 10 biographies that Mr. Miller had published in a single week, all of them about journalists.

Clocking my interest in journalist hagiography, Amazon's recommendation

A.I., PAGE 2

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Issue Number No. 44,592

PAGE TWO

My life story, as told by an A.I. chatbot

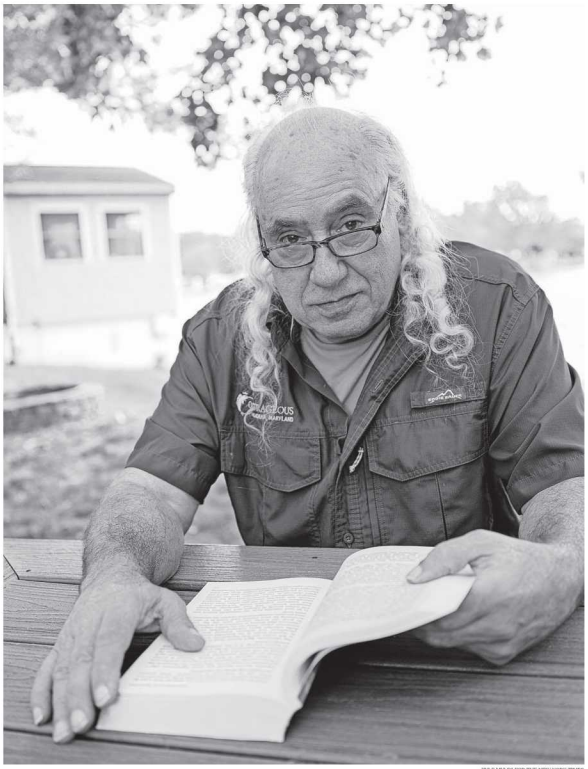
A.I., FROM PAGE 1

algorithm suggested I check out "Dan Rather: Truth and Tenacity," by a wildly prolific author named Diane W. Gray. She published 60 biographies last summer about a diverse cast of celebrities, including Joe Rogan, Celine Dion and the Italian soccer star Paolo Maldini. (That last one had a single, one-star review. "A.I. SLOP," the person wrote. "DO NOT BUY.")

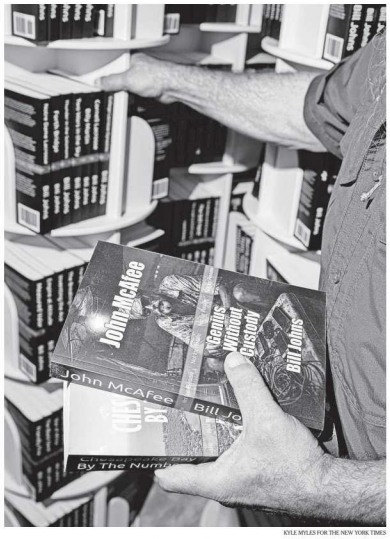
Make-money-fast influencers and passive-income enthusiasts on Reddit have been spreading the word for some time: Use artificial intelligence to write a book. If it sells, it's free money.

Amazon does not mind if people hawk A.I.-generated books on its platform, unless they are truly and deeply terrible. "Charlie Kirk: An Inspiring Journey of Young Political Conservative and Activist Who Fights for America," published in February 2025, became an Amazon best seller after Mr. Kirk was killed last September. But after dozens of scathing reviews called it "mind-numbing," "a scam" and "a disgrace," Amazon took it down.

A spokesman for Amazon, Josh Pflug, declined to comment on the book about Kirk, but he said the company invested "significant time and resources to ensure our guidelines are followed" and would "remove books that do not adhere to these guidelines."

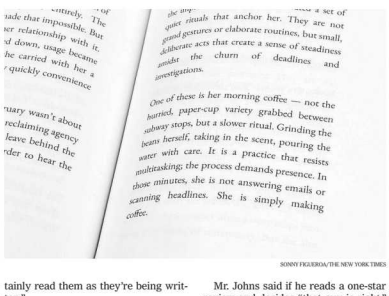


KYLE MYLES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



KYLE MYLES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Bill Johns, left, got hooked on making books with A.I. after he retired. Above, some of the 445 books Mr. Johns offers for sale on Amazon. "A lot of books never sell a copy," he conceded. Below, the biography of Kashmir Hill bears all the signs of A.I. slop, including a long description of her coffee-making ritual. In fact, her husband makes the coffee.



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…deliberate acts that create a sense of steadiness
…amidst the churn of deadlines and
…investigations.

One of these is her morning coffee — not the hurried, paper-cup variety grabbed between subway stops, but a slower ritual. Grinding the beans herself, taking in the scent, pouring the water with care. It is a practice that resists multitasking; the process demands presence. In those minutes, she is not answering emails or scanning headlines. She is simply making coffee.

SONNY FIGUEROA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

I wanted to find out who was writing these A.I. books, but there was a problem: My biographer did not want to talk.

Among the reasons for removal is "poor customer experience." That is certainly what I felt paging through my biography and reading that my love for my husband "unfolded with the kind of slow certainty that tends to last" during "the easy exchange of book recommendations." Boring and wrong. (It happened while singing karaoke.)

Two business school professors, curious about A.I. books, gathered data about 10 million books published on Amazon over the last five years. They found that the number of e-books published per month had tripled since the release of ChatGPT, to more than 300,000 at the end of last year, from around 100,000 in 2022. (Amazon said that its internal metrics did not show that level of growth but would not share its figures.)

I wanted to find out who was writing these A.I. books and how much money they were making doing it. But there was a problem: My biographer did not want to talk to me.

Mr. Miller had no contact information or revealing details in his bio. Knowing he combined "meticulous research with compelling storytelling" was no help in tracking him down. Mr. Pflug said Amazon did not provide contact information for sellers to protect their privacy. So I left that review politely asking the author to be in touch.

I came across yet another A.I. biographer, named Bill Johns. In a news article, Mr. Johns had been identified as a "made-up person" by a bona fide, best-selling human author who was frustrated that A.I.-generated imitations were competing with his own extensively reported book.

But Mr. Johns, 70, was not made up. He lived on the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland and, unlike my biographer, was willing to chat.

Mr. Johns retired in 2024 from his work as a cybersecurity consultant. Divorced and living alone, he suddenly had a lot of time on his hands. He was curious about A.I. and decided to experiment with it.

He spent a couple of weeks and $20 on ChatGPT to help him write about the history of hacking and published his first book in March 2025.

Of course, that was possible only because OpenAI, the company that created ChatGPT, had ingested the work of Wikipedia editors, Reddit commenters, authors and reporters like me. (I must mention here that The Times has a copyright lawsuit against OpenAI, though the A.I. firm says it is "without merit.")

Mr. Johns's book on hacking, "Ghosts in the Machine," sold only a couple of copies, but he was hooked.

Mr. Johns now has 445 books for sale on Amazon. He orders a paperback copy of each one. The books all feature a photograph of Mr. Johns in a serious dark suit — which is A.I.-generated.

The books are roughly organized by topic: sports, eccentric geniuses, famous bridges, alcohol, the Chesapeake Bay.

"A lot of books never sell a copy," he conceded during an interview at his home in June. But he does sell a few hundred books per month, each earning him roughly $7. A majority of his sales are physical books, which Amazon prints on demand.

The holiday gift-giving season was good to Mr. Johns: He sold 821 books for a profit of almost $6,000, per an Amazon sales report. "I wouldn't characterize them as flying off the shelves," he said, "but it's bar money, at least."

I wondered how many drinks my biography had bought for Mr. Miller, but he still hadn't replied to me. I had taken "The Biography of Kashmir Hill" with me to Maryland and asked Mr. Johns what he thought of it. He flipped through the thin volume and scoffed. "There's not a lot of content here," he said. "I could do this one by noon."

He said I deserved a "400-page book" and offered to write it. I declined.

We went into his home office, which had two curved screen monitors and a mechanical keyboard with snazzy rainbow backlighting. Mr. Johns sat down and showed me how he would typically start writing a book.

Mr. Johns reads what ChatGPT produces, pushes back if he thinks it needs changes and then pastes the text into a Word doc. He uses Amazon's Kindle Create app to convert the text into an e-book manuscript. He has ChatGPT generate a cover image and then uploads it all to Amazon, which does not charge for the privilege. His goal has been to write 10 books per week, which is the maximum Amazon allows.

I asked if he had read his books. "That's a funny question," he said. "I certainly read them as they're being written."

I was curious what readers thought of Mr. Johns's A.I. kitsch. He got five stars from one reviewer, but she had not read the book. It had been a gift for her husband, and he "seems to enjoy it," she wrote. The reviews from people who had actually read the books were brutal.

"One of the worst books I've ever purchased," said one reader. "Boring, verbose and repetitive," said another. "If you are looking for a great College Football book, this is not it," said a buyer of Mr. Johns's "College Football Dynasties," one of his most popular books over the holidays.

Mr. Johns said if he reads a one-star review and decides "that guy is right," he'll take the book down. "I don't take them personally," he said of such reviews.

Why would he? He didn't, technically speaking, write the book.

My own biographer did not seem to like my review asking him to contact me. Soon after I posted it, "The Biography of Kashmir Hill" disappeared from Amazon, as did his other biographies.

Everything by Mr. Miller is gone from Amazon. Only his author page remains.

Kitty Bennett and Aaron Krolik contributed research.

Ukraine's attacks on Crimea leave towns without power

CRIMEA, FROM PAGE 1

Olga, 24, counts herself lucky, because her family, living in a cottage rather than an apartment, can use a generator. But it cannot power the refrigerator, limiting food options. Her husband makes a long journey across the bridge to southern Russia to buy cheaper gas for it, but running the generator for five hours costs about $20, a hefty price for Russians.

Olga said she still expects the authorities to rise to the task, but she also referred to a topic most Russians fear to broach. People not only need basic services restored, she said, they need "the end of the war."

Even in central Crimea, where blackouts are less severe, the train station is shuttered. So are many stores, with "no power" signs on their doors. Supermarket shelves are not well stocked.

Blackouts have caught Rustem at his salon in the middle of cutting someone's hair. But with scissors and a battery-powered shaver, he said, "As long as I have daylight coming from the window, I'm fine."

Crimean residents said they knew people who had lost their jobs or were furloughed at idled factories in the north. Officials have promised some financial compensation to tourism-related businesses, but have not commented on reports of closed factories.

Ukrainian officials say they are striking Crimea to undermine Russia's military capabilities. President Volodymyr Zelensky in a speech last month said he expected Crimeans to understand that Ukraine was not targeting them.

But Robert Brovdi, commander of Ukraine's drone forces, bragged in a statement last week about "turning off the switch on Crimea."

Crimea was woefully unprepared for the crisis. In the fourth week of blackouts, officials there were still pledging to equip every hospital with a generator.

ALEXEY PAVLISHAK/REUTERS

ALEXEY PAVLISHAK/REUTERS

Above, outside a cafe in Yalta, Crimea, in July, a message on a screen urged people to join the army. Right, a beach in Yevpatoriya in June. Every municipality has been affected by the blackouts from Ukrainian attacks, even in touristy southern Crimea.

Russian state television has avoided showing images from the blackout-hit areas, and insists that all needs are being met.

Russia has offered a one-time payment of 15,000 rubles, about $190, to residents who lost power for more than 48 hours, which would not cover the cost of buying and running a small generator.

But outside Crimea, Russians could easily be unaware of the crisis. State television has avoided showing images from the blackout-hit areas, and insists that all needs there are being met. Lifestyle bloggers post videos of idyllic Crimean beaches and sunsets to counter what they dismiss as Ukrainian propaganda.

At a meeting Mr. Putin held with top officials this month, discussion touched on fuel supplies to Crimea, but made no mention of drone strikes the night before that had plunged the north into darkness.

Revealing the full scale of the problem to the public would mean admitting a weakness the Kremlin does not want ordinary Russians to see, said Ilya Shepelin, an exiled Russian journalist who studies TV propaganda.

But online, some Crimeans have been speaking out, flooding the social media of Sergei Aksyonov, the Kremlin-appointed head of Crimea, with comments expressing their frustration.

Alexei, a man from Crimea's south, wondered "how it was possible" that the power grid was so defenseless, and said he "did not know how to keep on living" without working communications. He confirmed his remarks to The New York Times but said he did not feel safe saying more.

Recently a business owner posted a cry for help on social media, asking friends and colleagues to help deliver drinking water to the north.

In a rare dispatch from the north, state-owned Crimea Vesti TV recently showed dozens of women and children sitting on the lawn of the municipal building in Krasnoperekopsk, tethered to phones and power banks that they were charging from a generator. It did not mention a drinking water shortage.

"All these problems do not deter Crimeans who are used to Ukrainian provocations," the broadcast said.

But denialism has its limits. A week into the north's complete blackout, a luxury seaside resort in the south, owned by Russia's major state bank, threw a lavish party with thousands of dressed-up revelers, huge LED screens, go-go dancers and fireworks.

Visitors were "teleported from our rotten present into a fairy-tale," Alexandra Moroz, a local resident, wrote on social media.

Then a drone attack cut the festivities short, sending guests, clutching their drinks, scurrying into the basement.

Nataliia Novosolova contributed reporting from Kyiv, Ukraine.

World

ED JONES/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Firefighting in Claouey, near Bordeaux in France, on Tuesday. Bordeaux's winemaking industry has been struggling under drought, heat waves, weak sales and tariffs.

Fires stalk Bordeaux crops

BORDEAUX, FRANCE

The smoke could affect this year's harvest, adding to winemakers' burdens

BY MARK LANDLER
AND GIULIA IMBERT

Draped in vines and flanked by half-timbered towers, the castle at Château Smith Haut Lafitte dates to 1365. It's the kind of legacy that gives its proprietors a sense of permanence.

But in the past week, a rampaging forest fire west of Bordeaux — one of the worst since World War II, forcing hundreds of thousands to evacuate — has burned to within 10 miles (16 kilometers) of the chateau's meticulously tended vineyards.

That has shaken both the chateau and Bordeaux's winemaking industry, which was already staggering under multiple burdens: drought, heat waves, weak sales because of changing drinking habits, and President Trump's tariffs on French wine.

"For the wine industry, it's one thing on top of the other. It doesn't make our lives very easy," said Ludovic Fradin, the chateau's managing director. "In the face of that risk, we need to be prepared."

Mr. Fradin, who works for the Cathiard family, which owns both the chateau and a vineyard in California's Napa Valley, said he was less worried about the clouds of smoke from the fires that have recently blanketed the vineyard.

Bordeaux's flat landscape and shifting winds, he said, mean that the smoke gets blown away within a day or two. Fires in the Napa Valley are more damaging for vineyards because the smoke gets trapped between its two mountain ranges and can linger over the grapes. And there are no reports of vineyards being damaged by the fire so far, according to the Bordeaux Wine Council.

Still, Mr. Fradin said, the chateau is preparing for a once unthinkable scenario in which a fire could reach its buildings. It has made plans to evacuate its animals, which include horses, chickens, goats, and llamas.

"The animals are living breathing beings, unlike the vines," Mr. Fradin said. "The vines are just material."

In the mythology of French wine, of course, vines are more than just material. They produce the grapes that make Bordeaux wines — the velvety cabernets and sweet Sauternes that have turned this part of France into a mecca for wine lovers, the home of world-famous appellations like Pomerol and St-Émilion.

While experts say Mr. Fradin is right about the topography of Bordeaux and how it differs from that of California, they say it is too soon to conclude that the smoke from the fires will not affect this year's vintage.

Much depends on timing. Research on how smoke exposure affects grapes has found that they are at highest risk between when they ripen, turning from green to red, and when they are harvested. The grapes at Château Smith Haut Lafitte have just turned: the ones used for white wine will be harvested next month, the ones for red wine in early September.

Even before the fires and clouds of smoke, this season was already shaping up as a small harvest, said Jane Anson, an author and wine columnist who lives in Bordeaux. An extremely rainy winter was followed by record-breaking heat and very little rain, which has caused the grapes to ripen early.

The climatic and economic challenges have taken a heavy toll on Bordeaux's winemakers, Ms. Anson said.

"There is a human thing of having one more thing to battle against," she said. "Like they needed this on top of everything else."

"For the wine industry, it's one thing on top of the other. It doesn't make our lives very easy."

The winemakers are quick to note that their problems pale next to those of some of their neighbors. More than 220,000 people have been evacuated across the Gironde region, one of the largest peacetime evacuations in French history. Television footage shows that one village west of Bordeaux, Le Porge, has been ravaged by the fire, with 152 houses destroyed.

Some vintners are doing what they can to help. Mr. Fradin said the chateau had filled several water tanks to give firefighters a backup supply and made its four tractor drivers available for the firefighting effort.

On Monday, President Emmanuel Macron of France visited Bordeaux, meeting with firefighters and the local authorities. Afterward, he warned that the fire could take weeks to extinguish, and that the coming days would be difficult because temperatures this week were expected to remain high.

"We are facing a fire unlike anything we have ever seen before," Mr. Macron said to reporters. "The situation we're in today is the most difficult we've ever recorded, the most difficult since World War II."

For Gabriel Barre, a small winegrower who, with his wife, Edith, produces 25,000 bottles a year of merlot, cabernet franc and malbec, the fires are just another sign of how much the world has changed since he took over the operation from his father, Paul, in 2016. The smoke reached the Barres' vineyard, Château la Grave, on the banks of the Dordogne River, about 15 miles from Bordeaux.

Mr. Barre, 44, said he wasn't sure how it would affect his harvest.

"It could have a smoky taste," he said with a smile.

Other climatic changes, like the record heat, were already problematic, he said. Higher temperatures produce grapes with higher sugar content. That makes it harder to produce the balanced taste of a classic Bordeaux wine.

"Bordeaux wines are known for their balance," Mr. Barre said. "But in recent years, we've been producing sun-drenched wines. What I mean by that is wines that burst on the palate — wines that are sweet, even too sweet."

For Mr. Barre, the economic and social trends are unforgiving. Bordeaux, he said, had an image of "luxury and snobbery." It has not produced the kinds of boldly flavored, lower-priced bottles — "rock 'n' roll wines," he called them — that other regions of France do. Its stuffy appellations do not appeal to younger consumers, who, in any event, are drinking less than their parents did.

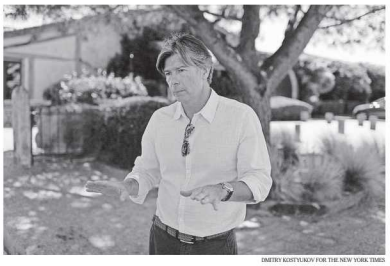
As Mr. Barre spoke, his son Arsène carried out glasses for a wine tasting. His father looked at him ruefully. Burdened by debt and climate-related challenges, Mr. Barre said this year's harvest would be his last. He did not want to put his son in the position of having to take over a failing business.

For Mr. Barre, who stamps the phrase "Made with Love" on every one of his labels, the fires are yet more evidence of a place and a time that are gone.

"There has been a radical change in the winemaking world," he said.

"This year, it feels like we're on another planet. When we talk about it on the phone with our friends, we don't want our kids to hear because it scares them."

DMITRY KOSTYUKOV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



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DMITRY KOSTYUKOV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ludovic Fradin, left, managing director of Château Smith Haut Lafitte, top, said he was preparing for a scenario when a fire could reach the winery's buildings. Above, vineyards at Château La Grave, a small winery in the region. It has been struggling because of climate-related challenges like record heat in recent years.

Unlikely hero's path began with an insult

NEW DELHI

Abhijeet Dipke embraced 'cockroach' label to lead a pivotal protest in India

BY SHOWKAT NANDA
AND ANUPREETA DAS

Abhijeet Dipke peered at the phone screen to see with his own eyes if what he'd just heard was true. For more than two months, Mr. Dipke had led a protest movement demanding the resignation of India's education minister — and now, he had gotten his wish.

Mr. Dipke fell to his knees and repeatedly punched the makeshift stage at New Delhi's main protest site in excitement. Then he rose up, grabbed a microphone and delivered the news to the sea of protesters around him.

"Long live student power," Mr. Dipke shouted, pumping his fist repeatedly. "We have done it!"

The crowd erupted into deafening applause, cheering, pumping their fists into the air and sharing group hugs. Mr. Dipke, 30, who had already built a gigantic following after founding a movement through which India's youth could channel their frustrations, had cemented his status as a folk hero.

He had taken on the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and scored a victory.

Barely two months before, Mr. Dipke was just another "international student from India," with a master's degree in public relations from Boston University, squeezing in workouts in between applying for jobs and playing FIFA soccer on his PlayStation, he said in an interview on Saturday from his perch onstage.

Hours before he heard that the government had acquiesced to the students' demands, he described his journey from introverted student to leader of a mass movement.

COCKROACHES, UNITED

On May 16, Mr. Dipke woke up in Boston to a comment made by the Chief Justice of India, Surya Kant, comparing unemployed Indian youth to "parasites" and "cockroaches."

Mr. Dipke said that he had been taken aback that the country's top judge would refer to India's youth in such a disparaging manner.

"I felt really hurt and humiliated," he recalled.

And so he posted a simple question on the social media platform X: "What if all cockroaches came together?"

Mr. Dipke said that he hadn't expected his musing to hold much power until he saw that millions of people — while embracing the humor — had also taken his post as a call to action. Within two days, he had built a website using A.I. tools, roping in some friends to help. Thus, the Cockroach Janta Party was born, the name a parody of the Bharatiya Janata Party of India's prime minister, Narendra Modi. Membership was open to the "lazy," the "unemployed" and anyone who "just rants." Within two weeks, the Cockroach party's Instagram account had picked up 22 million followers.

Mr. Dipke's timing was impeccable. Barely two weeks earlier, India's medical-college entrance exam, which 2.2 million aspiring doctors and dentists had taken, was canceled after the discovery that some questions had leaked beforehand. Such leaks are almost endemic to India's education system and regularly prompt fury and frustration.

To bring lasting change, though, Mr. Dipke and others spearheading the Cockroach movement would have to figure out how to alchemize the energy of the nascent movement.

PEACEFUL PROTESTS

Although India has a long history of democratic demonstrations, the space for any kind of agitation has eroded under the Modi administration. Mr. Dipke said that he had decided to return to India early last month to start a protest, despite fearing that he might be jailed or attacked.

"I'm not a national security threat," he said. "I'm a citizen of this country who loves this country."

Less than two weeks after Mr. Dipke's initial post, his Cockroach movement started protests in New Delhi in early June, next to an 18th-century observatory called Jantar Mantar.

"How long will we live in fear of this government?" he asked the hundreds of people who first gathered there.

For weeks, demonstrators camped out. Mr. Dipke and his team repeatedly urged protesters to keep their rallies peaceful as security forces maintained a heavy presence. Many protesters carried images of Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar, another central figure in India's independence movement who embraced nonviolent protest.

"Our movement is peaceful," Mr. Dipke said on Saturday, blaming the authorities for clashes with security officers as protesters tried to march to Parliament last week. The police said in a statement that demonstrators had become "unruly, aggressive, and violent."

BREAKTHROUGH

Mr. Dipke started his protest with a core demand: India's education minister, Dharmendra Pradhan, must resign because the exam leak had happened under his watch.

Mr. Modi's government largely ignored the demonstrations, even as they spread. Students made up the bulk of the protesters, but they were joined by people of all ages demanding accountability. Sonam Wangchuk, a prominent education activist, went on a hunger strike for 26 days.

The government first showed signs of listening as public outrage grew over the beating of protesters. They proposed talks at a senior minister's residence. Mr. Dipke and his colleagues pushed back, insisting that government officials must either come to Jantar Mantar or meet with them at a neutral venue. They rejected some government proposals, such as a law against leaking exam papers, as inadequate.

Eventually, three rounds of talks were held at a neutral venue over five days, between a Cockroach party delegation and two senior ministers.

Although Mr. Dipke has an enormous following, he said that he wasn't sure whether he saw himself as a political leader.

Then came the phone call to Mr. Dipke late on Saturday afternoon while he was onstage. The government had agreed to nearly everything the party had demanded. It vowed to pay compensation to the families of students who had died by suicide after the exam leak. It agreed to withdraw police cases against protesters. And it promised to discuss a five-point charter on broader exam and education overhauls.

After the agreement, Mr. Dipke's colleagues announced that their protest was being called off "in good faith," shaking hands with government officials in a scene that weeks earlier would have seemed unthinkable.

Although Mr. Dipke has an enormous following — every day, people stood in line for hours waiting to shake his hand — he said that he wasn't sure whether he saw himself as a political leader. Calling himself a "big introvert" who enjoys history books and documentaries, he said he wanted to keep the limelight on the movement rather than on himself.

He added that he also worried about his parents, who live in the state of Maharashtra, in central India. His mother, who breaks down on every phone call, he said, "kind of weakens me as well."

By midmorning on Sunday, the street outside Jantar Mantar was quiet. Rows of yellow police barricades were stacked along the roadside. Workers picked up trash and painted over the graffiti that protesters had left on the brick walls.

Vijay Solanki, who recently completed an engineering degree, said that he admired Mr. Dipke for making people believe in the power of action. "Most of us were frustrated, but we didn't know where to put that frustration," said Mr. Solanki, 26. "He brought students together for the first time, it felt like our voices were actually being heard."

SAUMYA KHANDELWAL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Abhijeet Dipke, center, at a protest in New Delhi on Saturday. Demonstrators demanded the resignation of India's education minister and changes to the country's exam system.

WORLD

CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

A noodle stall in Seoul. Asian countries rely heavily on energy imports from the Middle East, and they have been deeply affected by the economic fallout of the Iran conflict.

War makes street food costlier

Vendors across Asia see ingredient prices rise, and customers aren't spending

BY MUKTITA SUHARTONO, YAN ZHUANG, MAX KIM AND SUHASINI RAJ

ANNEFOTO MUKHERJEE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

LAUREN DECICCA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

From left: Indian samosas and Thai som tum. "People really live frugally because everything has increased in price," said Supatra Ruamthot, a som tum vendor in Bangkok.

Samosas in India. Noodles in South Korea. Street food of all kinds in Indonesia.

Across Asia, people are discovering that staple dishes that were once reliably cheap are no longer so affordable, as the shock waves of the Iran war spread around the world.

Asian countries, which rely heavily on energy imports from the Middle East, have been deeply affected by the economic fallout of the conflict, which has reignited after the collapse of a preliminary U.S.-Iran cease-fire.

Since the fighting began in February, tourism across Asia has plummeted, inflation has surged and prices of ingredients are soaring. Customers and food sellers alike are feeling the pinch.

"We are all in the same boat, hoping it won't sink," said Supatra Ruamthot, who sells street food in Bangkok.

SOUTH KOREA

For years, Kim Moon-jung sold bowls of kalguksu — hand-cut noodles in savory broth — out of her restaurant in southern Seoul for 9,000 won (about $6). But with the cost of ingredients steadily rising, she plans to increase the price to at least 10,000 won in the next few months.

A flurry of local news media reports followed the announcement in March by South Korea's consumer agency that the average bowl of kalguksu in Seoul had exceeded 10,000 won, an important psychological marker.

Residents of the capital are so eager to find affordable meals that earlier this year they created a crowdsourced map to identify restaurants selling meals for 10,000 won or less.

"There's not a single ingredient that hasn't become more expensive," said Ms. Kim, 59.

She said she was not worried that the price hike would deter customers. "They also see that everything's getting more expensive," she said. "So how can they blame us?"

INDIA

At Yadav Milk Dairy in Lucknow, a city that is known for its street food, owner Shubham Yadav lamented that he was "barely profiting" from selling samosas, the potato-filled pastries that are one of India's most famous culinary exports.

Mr. Yadav, 29, said the price of the gas cylinders he uses had doubled to 3,600 rupees, or about $38. India imports about 60 percent of its liquefied petroleum gas, much of that via the Strait of Hormuz. The wartime disruption of the waterway has threatened that supply.

Mr. Yadav said he could not double his prices to match the surging cost of gas, so he had increased the price of each samosa by about 1 cent. But this meant his profits were increasingly thin, he said, and he worried that he might need to raise prices further.

He said he hoped that his customers enjoyed his samosas enough to keep buying. "But at what price, is the question?" he asked.

THAILAND

Before the war began, Ms. Ruamthot, who has dished out som tum, or green papaya salad, for 20 years, would start receiving orders before she had even finished setting up her stall in the morning. At lunchtime, customers would wait up to 30 minutes.

These days, she does the waiting.

"It's so bad now. Business is very slow," said Ms. Ruamthot, 62.

Even though her costs have risen by about 30 percent, she has not increased her prices out of fear that doing so would drive more customers away.

"Even with the current price, we are losing customers," she said. "People really live frugally because everything has increased in price."

Her profits had fallen by more than half, to about 1,000 baht a day (around $30), leaving her unsure how long she could sustain her business. When she speaks with other food vendors, she learns that her situation isn't unique.

"Everybody is experiencing the same thing," she said.

INDONESIA

"If I didn't increase the price I couldn't survive," said Ridah, 48, who sells gado-gado, a dish of boiled vegetables dressed with peanut sauce, in Jakarta.

Standing next to her food cart, she rattled off ingredients that had increased in cost, including peanuts and plastic bags.

Ms. Ridah — who, like many Indonesians, uses only one name — said her profits had more than halved since the war began, and business was even worse than during the coronavirus pandemic. Then, she still had customers.

"Now, no one is buying," she said.

She felt that she had no choice but to increase the price of her dish by 1,000 rupiah (about five cents) to 18,000 rupiah (about $1).

"This is the only thing I can do and how I earned my living," said Ms. Ridah, who has run her food cart for nearly 30 years. "We just have to survive this."

Muktita Suhartono reported from Bangkok and Jakarta, Yan Zhuang and Max Kim from Seoul, and Suhasini Raj from Lucknow, India.

Iran is in no hurry to resume U.S. talks

Its leaders say they hold the leverage and control the Strait of Hormuz

BY YEGANEH TORBATI

Iran's skies have recently been free of the sound of explosions and airstrikes, after a bout of renewed fighting with the United States. But Iranian officials say they have not agreed to a cease-fire and are in no hurry to hold direct talks with American negotiators.

Instead, Iranian officials say that they are in a position of strength, military leaders boast of battlefield successes, and diplomats dismiss U.S. claims that they are eager to return to negotiations.

The rhetoric coming from Iran indicates that its leaders are comfortable with the state of limbo with the United States — something between peace and full-fledged war — believing that they can handle renewed conflict and that they have leverage over President Trump. The priority for Iran seems to be gaining recognition of its control over the strategic Strait of Hormuz waterway, a concession that the United States has been unwilling to make.

Despite the bluster, the uncertainty is a challenge for Iran, analysts say. Fighting could break out again at any time, a final settlement appears distant and Iran's economy is almost certain to deteriorate further because of instability, wartime destruction and a U.S. naval blockade.

Ramazan Sharif, a former spokesman for Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, the ideological military force that has solidified its control over Iran during the war, said on Sunday that Iran's "enemy" had "faced strategic defeat at every step," Iranian state media reported.

Iranian diplomats have reacted with more restraint to the recent pause in the fighting, after two weeks of trading attacks. But there is little hint that they are in a mood for compromise.

"At present, what exists cannot be described as a cease-fire," the Iranian foreign ministry spokesman, Esmail Baghaei, said at a news conference on Monday.

Mr. Trump said on Monday that Iran had asked for a pause to meet for talks, and that the two sides were engaged in discussions.

"We're talking right now," he told reporters aboard Air Force One, adding that there was "a good chance" that a new round of diplomacy with Iran could yield a breakthrough. Last week, he said at the White House that "they want to meet desperately to try and end it."

Mr. Baghaei denied that there were any negotiations with the United States currently.

Iran faces stark internal divisions over the diplomatic contacts, with hardliners opposed to resuming negotiations and denouncing the elected government, which has engaged in talks in pursuit of a cease-fire.

Iran's negotiators, Mr. Baghaei said, were with Oman, over management of the Strait of Hormuz, the critical waterway for oil and gas shipments that Iran effectively shut down after being attacked by the United States and Israel in late February.

"They believe that time is on their side, that they can absorb pain and pressure more successfully than Donald Trump can, and that ultimately he will agree to a deal that fits their demands without any concessions from their side," said Gregory Brew, a senior analyst on Iran at the Eurasia Group, a political risk advisory firm.

The recent resumption of fighting caused oil prices to surge, raising prices at the gas pump for American consumers. Oil prices had fallen sharply, after the United States and Iran paused their attacks.

Mr. Trump faces a painful dilemma in deciding his next step on Iran.

The New York Times reported on Saturday that private U.S. deliberations over the war have focused on the Pentagon's shrinking stockpiles of air-defense munitions, making a return to war high risk. That is just one of several concerns for U.S. officials, along with the danger of a widening war, the effect on Gulf allies and global energy supplies.

/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Missiles on display in Tehran last week. Iranian officials have said that they are in a position of strength in the conflict with the United States and Israel.

It is difficult to know the state of Iran's missile supplies, said Farzin Nadimi, a senior fellow with the Washington Institute and an expert on Iranian military affairs.

Iran is believed to have produced between 700 and 1,000 solid-propellant ballistic missiles between the brief war with Israel in June last year and the outbreak of the current war, he said. Its output of liquid-fuel and cruise missiles is less quantifiable, he added.

Open-source information on Iran's missile production can be fragmentary, Mr. Nadimi said. That opacity means that less is known about how Iran would fare in a return to full-blown war.

Still, Iran does not "want to return to a full-scale war that involves both the U.S. and Israel, and also one with open-ended prospects," he said.

Iranian officials have hinted in recent interviews that they agreed to the cease-fire partly because missile stocks were running low or were not fully accessible, he added.

Iran is at risk of overreaching, Mr. Brew said. For Mr. Trump, escalating the war could be more appealing than accepting a deal that gives Iran control over the strait, he added, and other countries are unlikely to accept tolls on ships. There is scope for both sides to de-escalate if Iran can accept a compromise arrangement for the future of the waterway.

Seeking political concessions, Houthis pressure Saudi oil exports

YEMEN, FROM PAGE 1

group's leader, said in a televised speech on July 16, after tensions with Saudi Arabia spiked.

RISK OF ALL-OUT WAR

The Houthis are acting in support of their main ally, Iran, but also to force Saudi Arabia and the international community to make political concessions in Yemen, according to researchers who study the group.

In the past week, the Houthis have fired missiles and drones into Saudi Arabia and at ships in the Red Sea, disrupting already volatile global energy markets, while a Saudi-led military coalition has carried out airstrikes in Houthi-held territory for the first time in years.

"There is a real concern that the internal Yemeni war could reignite," said April Alley, an analyst who worked on Yemen's peace process at the United Nations and is now a senior fellow at the Washington Institute, a research organization.

This account of the situation in Yemen is based on interviews with Yemeni officials, current and former Western diplomats involved in Yemen's peace process and regional analysts.

Many spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the details of sensitive political negotiations.

The Houthis have chosen a vulnerable moment for Saudi Arabia, analysts say. Saudi Arabia typically exports most of its oil through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway that Iran has effectively blocked since the Iran war began. The kingdom now depends on the Red Sea to export oil — the lifeblood of its economy.

"The Houthis are good at smelling blood in the water," Ms. Alley said.

MOHAMMED HUWAIS/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Houthi supporters protesting in Sanaa, Yemen, this month. The Houthis are a group of Shiite Muslim rebels supported by Iran, and they started a civil war in Yemen in 2014.

The Saudi response so far has been calibrated to try to avoid getting sucked into a broader war, said Ahmed Nagi, a senior analyst for Yemen at International Crisis Group. But if they hold back entirely, they risk emboldening the Houthis, he added.

"The Saudis were cornered, and they feel like there will be a higher cost if they stay silent," he said.

Trapped in the middle of this power struggle are tens of millions of Yemeni citizens suffering from widespread deprivation. Some of them say that even a return to fighting would be better than their current despair.

"We've had enough of this hardship, and we needed a way out, whether through dialogue or war," said Ayman Abdulhaq, a 43-year-old father of four and taxi driver in the Houthi-controlled capital of Yemen, Sanaa.

"People are always looking for a breakthrough, no matter the consequences," he added.

The Houthis began as a ragtag group of Shiite Muslim rebels in Yemen's mountainous north, with a slogan calling for death to America and Israel. With Iranian support, they started a civil war by overrunning the capital in 2014, routing the internationally recognized government in Sanaa.

Saudi Arabia, Yemen's neighbor to the north, was alarmed at the idea of an Iranian-backed militia on its border. A Saudi-led military coalition began a bombing campaign, backing anti-Houthi forces inside Yemen that were trying to restore the government.

But the war dragged on for years, and Saudi Arabia pulled back amid international pressure over its role in exacerbating Yemen's already severe humanitarian crisis. From afar, Saudi officials still exert a final say over a variety of Yemeni affairs.

FRUSTRATION WITH SAUDI TRUCE

At first, it seemed as if military fatigue and political will on both sides could lead to a lasting peace.

In late 2023, with the help of the United Nations, Saudi Arabia and the Houthis came close to signing a preliminary peace deal — referred to by officials as a "road map" — that would have provided an outline for a long-term political resolution, according to Yemeni and Western officials involved in those efforts.

A key component of that deal was an agreement to enable salary payments to Yemeni government employees in Houthi territory, whose paychecks had been suspended during the war. The amount at stake was significant — $1 billion to $2 billion annually, according to two Western diplomats and a Yemeni official briefed on the plan.

The money was mainly to come from Yemeni oil revenue, those people said, with additional Saudi government funding to fill any gaps, according to the Yemeni official. Yemen's oil resources are outside Houthi territory, and the Houthis have been eager to gain access to them.

Before the deal could be finalized, however, the Hamas-led attack on Israel in October 2023, followed by Israel's devastating war in Gaza, derailed Yemen's peace process. The Houthis announced a military campaign in solidarity with Palestinians, shooting missiles and drones at Israel and at ships in the Red Sea.

Throughout the war in Gaza, the Houthis avoided attacking Saudi Arabia. But their attacks in the Red Sea drew the ire of countries that depended on the waterway for shipping. When President Trump began his second term last year, he declared the Houthis a foreign terrorist organization and launched a bombing campaign against them. That designation worsened an already painful economic situation in areas under Houthi control, and growing resentment put pressure on the group, said Mr. al-Muslimi, the Chatham House researcher.

HOUTHIS JOIN THE FRAY

Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, a senior Houthi political official, said in an interview that Saudi Arabia had failed "to implement any of the provisions of the road map, foremost among them the payment of salaries for all state employees."

He added that Saudi Arabia was at fault for the current escalation, and he accused the kingdom of imposing unjust restrictions on aviation and shipping to Yemen, which the Houthis and many Yemenis in their territory describe as a blockade.

In February, when the United States and Israel went to war with Iran, the Houthis seemed willing to stay on the sidelines. Months later, after a cease-fire between the United States and Iran fell apart, the calculus for the Houthis altered. That change may have been set off by Iranian pressure to get involved, although intervention also serves Houthi goals, several analysts said.

This month, the Houthis began insisting that an Iranian plane fly into Sanaa, where flights had been suspended for a year. Houthi officials called the plane's arrival a bid to break the blockade.

Describing themselves as the sovereign government of Yemen, the group demanded the lifting of all restrictions on planes and ships entering their territory. One Western diplomat said there had been talks about reopening flights but the Houthis had refused several proposals.

When a second Iranian flight tried to land in Sanaa, the Houthis accused Saudi Arabia of bombing the airport. The Saudi-backed Yemeni government claimed it had launched airstrikes to force the plane to divert and accused the Houthis of using the flights to import Iranian weaponry, which the Houthis denied.

The Houthis subsequently declared a blockade on Saudi ships in the Red Sea. Each side has claimed attacks on the other since then.

Whether things escalate further could depend on the Trump administration's stance. A senior Trump administration official told The New York Times that the United States would empower its allies to take the lead in regional security and supported a diplomatic resolution in Yemen.

Last week, Mr. Trump threatened on social media to inflict "major military punishment" on the militia if they continued to attack Saudi oil tankers.

He expressed disappointment with the Houthis, saying that they had, "until now, acted very professionally and smart."

Vivian Nereim reported from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Shuaib Almosawa from Sanaa, Yemen.

New targets for arrest: Expired visa holders

Action against overstays at U.S. airports opens up vast pool for deportation

BY HAMED ALEAZIZ AND MIRIAM JORDAN

The Trump administration has begun arresting foreign citizens with expired U.S. visas as they travel through airports, including spouses of Americans, according to documents obtained by The New York Times and interviews with immigration lawyers — a tactic that opens up a vast new pool of people for deportation.

Immigration agents in plain clothes have whisked away targets at check-in counters and arrival gates, with enforcement actions in at least 15 airports in recent weeks. Some of the arrests have occurred quietly, while others have happened as angry fellow passengers filmed the encounters.

The recent arrests appear to be an expansion of an arrangement between the Transportation Security Administration and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The Times reported in December that ICE officers were arresting people with deportation orders at airports with the help of information provided by airlines to the T.S.A.

Now, through a review of U.S. Homeland Security Department documents and interviews with lawyers for more than 25 people from more than a dozen countries recently detained at airports, The Times has learned that the program apparently now includes people with expired visas — a much larger group.

Hundreds of thousands of immigrants and visitors overstay visas each year. Many with expired visas occupy a legal gray area, as they are awaiting visa extensions or green cards and have been issued work permits. Such individuals were not prioritized for deportation in the past unless they had committed crimes, and they were rarely detained while waiting for visa extensions or green cards. But that has changed under President Trump, whose administration has undertaken a campaign of mass deportation and views all visa overstays as illegal.

"This administration is working diligently to ensure that aliens in our country illegally can no longer fly unless it is out of our country to self-deport," a spokesperson for the Homeland Security Department said in a statement. The agency did not confirm the expansion of the program.

The department, which oversees ICE, has not disclosed how many people have been detained at airports as overstays under the new initiative. The arrests come during a period in which the White House has pushed ICE for more arrests across the United States, and Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin has pledged to turn "up the heat on the streets." To that end, the administration has set a target of 2,000 immigration arrests a day, roughly double the pace from earlier this year.

Interviews with more than a dozen immigration attorneys, advocacy organizations and an airline employee reveal a broad cross-section of targets: an engineer awaiting a work-visa extension, several newlyweds married to U.S. citizens and a former au pair.

ALICIA DANTZKER

Footage of encounters between travelers and ICE officers have flooded social media. In one widely circulated video, Chantal Morales Rojas, a 27-year-old from Ecuador, was detained by plainclothes officers as she boarded a Southwest Airlines flight from Denver to Oakland, Calif., on July 20. She had been spending the weekend with the family for whom she had worked as an au pair, according to the family.

"In 38 years practicing immigration law, I had never seen this. And I know it's happening to lots of people."

When Ms. Morales Rojas scanned her boarding pass, an alarm sounded and the gate agent asked her to wait. Moments later, two plainclothes agents intercepted her in the jetway.

"They said they were going to be respectful, that they would be polite," Alicia Dantzker, a friend of the family, who was on the same flight and filmed part of the encounter, told The Times in an interview. The video captures the men encircling Ms. Morales Rojas, and then ushering her through a side door and down steps to the tarmac as Ms. Dantzker screams for help.

Also among those detained was a Ugandan woman in a wheelchair who has sickle cell anemia and an active asylum application, according to her lawyer.

In another case, ICE attempted to arrest an Australian citizen who had overstayed his visa at the Las Vegas airport, according to the Department of Homeland Security. The scene was recorded by a bystander whose video of the encounter drew wide attention. Officers let him go "to de-escalate the situation and for officer safety," but ICE ended up taking him into custody a day later when he tried to board a flight in Los Angeles, the department said in a statement.

"In 38 years practicing immigration law, I had never seen this," said Charles Kuck, who is based in Atlanta and is representing an Indian engineer who was detained while awaiting a work-permit extension. "And I know it's happening to lots of people."

Shannon Shepherd, an immigration lawyer who is vice chair for the Chicago chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, said she and other lawyers were revising longstanding advice about domestic air travel. "Before, I was saying, 'As long as you have an ID, you can travel domestically,'" Ms. Shepherd said. "Now I am turning around and saying, 'If you are in the process of changing status, avoid any travel.'"

The original collaboration between T.S.A. and ICE began in May 2025, when the airport security agency started sharing information with the immigration agency for enforcement purposes, according to a document obtained via the Freedom of Information Act from the government transparency group American Oversight and shared with The Times.

ICE shared names of individuals with deportation orders with the airport agency, which would run them through its databases and report any hits to ICE for potential arrest. It was a remarkable shift from past practices, when the federal government avoided involving the T.S.A. in immigration enforcement for fear of disrupting domestic travel.

Now, "the net they are casting for people they want to detain is far wider," said Ghassan Shamieh, an immigration lawyer in San Francisco.

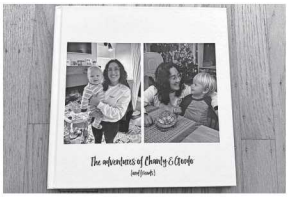
"It's not people with criminal records" being targeted, Mr. Shamieh said. "You are talking about people with legitimate pending applications."

Mr. Shamieh has four clients who were detained at airports in the last 10 days, including two women who recently married Americans and are in the process of obtaining permanent residency through their spouses.

On Tuesday, an immigration judge granted her release on a $35,000 bond. But D.H.S. lawyers reserved the right to appeal within 30 days, and she is likely to remain detained until they decide.

Ms. Morales Rojas, the au pair, entered the United States lawfully in January 2023 as a J-1 exchange visitor, a legal status that allowed her to work for two years, according to her lawyer. Her visa expired Jan. 4, 2025, according to D.H.S. Before the exchange program ended, Ms. Morales Rojas filed an application with immigration authorities to remain in the country, said the lawyer, Laura Lichter.

DAVE SANDERS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



Left, Chantal Morales Rojas, who worked as an au pair, being detained at Denver International Airport. Right, a photo book that her former employers made for her. Above, federal immigration officers at LaGuardia Airport in New York.

"During the last three and a half years, Morales Rojas lived openly in the United States with the government's knowledge of her pending case, passed repeated background checks, and received work authorization from D.H.S. while waiting for her application to be reviewed," Ms. Lichter said. "The process she's pursuing is completely lawful."

But homeland security officials said in a statement that "in violation of our nation's laws, she overstayed her visa." On Tuesday, a judge granted her release on a $3,000 bond.

Ms. Lichter has filed suit challenging the government's decision to arrest and detain Ms. Morales Rojas without a proper arrest warrant and without an individualized determination that detention was necessary.

Lauren and Scott Cahr, her former employers, said they had hired Ms. Morales Rojas when their first child, Silas, was 6 months old. The Cahrs said in an interview that they had flown Ms. Morales Rojas to Denver during an Ultimate Frisbee tournament that they attended, and she had helped care for Silas and his little brother.

The family formed a deep bond, and the Cahrs created a custom photo book titled "The Adventures of Chanty and Gordo," the nicknames Ms. Morales Rojas and their son called each other, as a parting gift.

"She is an amazing young woman who we were so lucky to have in our lives," Ms. Cahr said. "We have tried to maintain a consistent relationship with her."

Ms. Cahr has visited Ms. Morales Rojas in detention, while members of the Cahrs' Ultimate Frisbee community have launched a GoFundMe campaign to help cover legal costs.

Grants worth billions for transit projects are on hold

Unspent funding leaves U.S. cities' plans for train and bus services in limbo

BY EMILY BADGER AND ALICIA PARLAPIANO

For decades, the U.S. government has funneled big-ticket grants to local communities to help them take on ambitious construction projects to expand public transit. The grants, sometimes in the billions of dollars, have funded new railroad tracks, train stations and roads rebuilt for modern bus service. Today, they're funding extensions of the Second Avenue Subway in New York and the Red Line in Chicago, as well as the Gateway Tunnel under the Hudson River and bus infrastructure in Indianapolis and San Antonio.

But since President Trump returned to office, the Federal Transit Administration has not signed a single new agreement under the program, known as Capital Investment Grants. Large projects ready to enter the final phase of the program's yearslong pipeline have stalled there. The administration also tried halting payments to the New York and Chicago projects, forcing courts to intervene.

As the number of pending projects builds up, so has anxiety about the federal government's support for major transit infrastructure. Money that Congress designated for that purpose is accumulating too: More than $7 billion hasn't been obligated to any project.

"It's hard to look at the last year and see anything other than a deliberate slowdown of these grants," said Steve Davis, director of the advocacy group Transportation for America.

The program illustrates a subtler tactic in how the Trump administration is managing federal funds: not just terminating grants, as it did in droves last year, but quietly declining to give out new ones.

That absence of action is harder to trace, and harder for communities to contest. More than a dozen transit agencies and local governments seeking grants declined interviews or would not comment about the program, amid fears that a fleeting phrase could anger the administration with millions of dollars on the line.

The U.S. Department of Transportation, which includes the transit agency, said in a statement that projects were working their way through the multistage grant process required by law. And the agency noted that it has supported transit in other ways, including with funds to World Cup host cities and with oversight pushing transit agencies to lower crime.

As the administration tries to wrest more control from Congress over federal spending, the potential consequences for infrastructure grants are acute. Delays compound rising construction costs that outpace overall inflation. Without the certainty of federal funding, it's harder for communities to pursue bonds and other financing for big projects.

And any unspent grant money is something tangible not built — a subway station without elevators for accessibility, a bus line without dedicated lanes for faster travel, a commuter rail that can't carry enough trains.

"It's just a little bit anathema to me that you would have a program that isn't getting the money to the projects," said Derek Miller, the president and C.E.O. of the Salt Lake Chamber in Utah, who also worked for the transportation and infrastructure committee in the U.S. House in the 2000s.

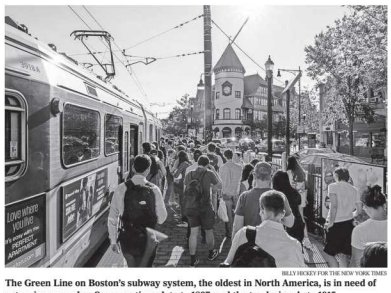
Utah is up against a deadline to host the 2034 Olympics. That may sound far off, Mr. Miller said, but the state needs to start on infrastructure next year. And the top priority is the FrontRunner 2X project now in the pipeline seeking a $2.4 billion grant. It would add parallel track to sections of an 83-mile-long (134-kilometer) commuter rail, enabling more trains for more frequent service and more riders.

It's a "head-scratcher," Mr. Miller said of the slow process.

"JUST NO WAY" TO BUILD PROJECTS

It's not unusual for an administration to complete few of these grant agreements in its first year (the Biden administration signed six in its final weeks in office, clearing the decks as outgoing officials often do). But people who follow the program say the drought has grown more conspicuous.

"The concern here is that we're 18 months without a signed" agreement, said Ward McCarragher, the vice president for government affairs and advocacy for the American Public Transportation Association. And 10 projects pursuing grants already have all their funding ready in the F.T.A.'s internal accounting, he noted, including $375 million for bus rapid transit service in Charleston, S.C., and $150 million each for bus projects in Los Angeles and Columbus, Ohio.



BILLY HICKEY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Green Line on Boston's subway system, the oldest in North America, is in need of extensive upgrades. Some sections date to 1897, and the track signals to 1915.

"It's hard to look at the last year and see anything other than a deliberate slowdown of these grants."

Communities can't count on that money, though, until the F.T.A. reviews engineering plans, environmental assessments, ridership and cost data and local funding commitments. Projects spend years in that review — some never make it to the end — and no money is guaranteed until an agreement is signed.

Smaller communities would be hurt most by delays or grants that never materialize, said Yonah Freemark, a researcher at the Urban Institute. They may not have dedicated taxes to fund transit or state programs to step in. Of the 46 projects in the pipeline, most aren't trying to dig a tunnel under a major river — they're seeking $50 million to $150 million for bus rapid transit.

"There is just no way that local communities can afford these changes by themselves," said Natali Fani-González, the county council president in Montgomery County, Md., in the Washington suburbs.

The county is seeking $150 million toward a nearly $200 million project to revamp Veirs Mill Road, a wide thruway that has been surrounded over the years by homes, schools and businesses. "Imagine a highway in the heart of a neighborhood," Ms. Fani-González said. The corridor is dotted with makeshift memorials to pedestrians who have died.

The county wants to put in a bus rapid transit line with dedicated bus lanes, boarding stations and priority signals, as well as better sidewalks and cycling access.

For the largest projects in the program, proponents argue that the federal government has an interest in major infrastructure in the United States' economic engines.

"Greater Boston is what it is today because of the federal partnership on mega projects," said Tom Ryan, a senior adviser at A Better City, a greater Boston business organization. The federal government, through other programs, helped fund the Big Dig that transformed downtown Boston and the cleanup of Boston Harbor.

Today the region wants to modernize the oldest subway system in North America, the Green Line on the Boston T. Some sections date to 1897, and the track signals to 1915. Twenty-five stations aren't fully accessible. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority has begun to order a new generation of trains for the line, but much of the system needs updating to support them.

It's asking the federal government to contribute about $2 billion toward a roughly $4 billion investment (to be paid over many years).

SKEPTICISM AT THE TOP

There are other signs of the administration's disregard for these grants, even if it can't end a program Congress created. The first Trump Administration proposed eliminating its funding at one point (Congress funded it anyway).

The grants then made an appearance in Project 2025 as a poor use of funds.

"In terms of bang for your buck, these projects are a lot more expensive than is necessary, and they provide a form of transportation that is increasingly obsolete," said Diana Furchtgott-Roth, a transportation official in the first Trump administration who wrote the Project 2025 chapter on transportation. These projects rely on fixed infrastructure, she said, in a world with ride-share apps, e-bikes, bike-share systems, electric scooters and even autonomous cars.

The transportation secretary, Sean Duffy, also released an early memo proposing to prioritize transportation funding to communities with high rates of marriages and births, naming one program in particular — Capital Investment Grants.

Then last fall, the White House budget director, Russell Vought, announced he was freezing payments to New York for the Gateway Tunnel and Second Avenue Subway for potentially violating new rules on disadvantaged business contractors. Two days later, he said he was doing the same with the Chicago Transit Authority.

Judges later ordered the administration to resume funding. But Mr. Vought's Office of Management and Budget, which doles out appropriated money to agencies, has continued to make unusual moves with the program. Of its nearly $7.9 billion in available resources, the budget office has designated more than $5.2 billion for next fiscal year — effectively putting it out of reach should the F.T.A. want to use it to sign a grant today.

"I have never seen a situation where the F.T.A. says, 'Oh, we don't need $5 billion because we're not going to have projects ready for that,'" said Sarah Kline, a transportation consultant who earlier worked on transit legislation in the Senate Banking Committee. "That just doesn't happen."

When the new fiscal year begins Oct. 1, the White House budget office could simply push that money into the future again. The office did not respond to questions about how it has handled the program.

While communities wait, voters' expectations are at stake, too. In 2024, voters around Columbus passed a sales tax increase to help fund an $8 billion transportation plan, called LinkUS, designed around bus rapid transit.

"I tell people in Columbus that you will know Columbus before and after LinkUS," said Shannon Hardin, the Columbus City Council president. "It will literally transform how folks not just get around, but how this city grows."

When voters opted to raise their own taxes in tight times to do it, he said, it was with the expectation that the federal government would be there, too.

Francesca Paris contributed graphics.

WORLD

Admiral relied on politics to rise in Pentagon

Critics say promotion path under defense secretary has deviated from tradition

BY GREG JAFFE AND KATE KELLY

Adm. Daryl Caudle saw an opening to land the Navy's top job last year, and he seized it.

Before Pete Hegseth had even been sworn in as defense secretary, Admiral Caudle, then the head of a major Navy training command, offered to help Mr. Hegseth prepare for his politically contentious Senate confirmation hearing, according to current and former defense officials.

The outreach was a breach of military ethics, the officials said. Senior military officers are supposed to avoid any hint of partisan bias or political activity.

Nothing came of the offer. But soon after Mr. Hegseth took office, he fired the first woman to lead the Navy: Admiral Caudle's boss. Days later, a senior officer on Admiral Caudle's staff contacted Mr. Hegseth's team in another breach of protocol.

Since taking office nearly 18 months ago, Pete Hegseth has fired or sidelined more than two dozen senior officers.

His pitch: Mr. Hegseth should choose Admiral Caudle to be the next chief of naval operations, the current and former officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive personnel matters.

The officer described Admiral Caudle in terms that matched Mr. Hegseth's view of the values that military officers should embody. There was "no one more in line" with Mr. Hegseth's vision for remaking the military, he said, according to an official familiar with the exchange. The officer cast Admiral Caudle as a "warfighter" who wanted to remove "woke barriers" that he claimed were weakening the force, the official said.

Even though Admiral Caudle was not on a list of candidates recommended by senior Navy officials, Mr. Hegseth chose him for the job.

But before the promotion could be finalized, the admiral needed to address another problem. There was an unresolved inspector general investigation into comments he had made to sailors about the Pentagon's Sexual Assault Prevent and Response program, officials said. Some interpreted his remarks as blaming victims.

To help resolve the inquiry, Admiral Caudle hired Timothy Parlatore, a Navy Reservist and well-known lawyer who had represented Mr. Hegseth and President Trump. Mr. Parlatore had recently been tapped by Mr. Hegseth to serve as his "special adviser" in the Pentagon. Before Admiral Caudle was a client, Mr. Parlatore had recommended him to Mr. Hegseth as a strong candidate to lead the Navy, officials said.

The inspector general found the allegations of wrongdoing to be unsubstantiated, and Admiral Caudle took over as the 34th chief of naval operations last summer.

His path to that position is a case study in how the military promotion process at the Pentagon under Mr. Hegseth has deviated from tradition, leaving it susceptible in the view of critics to politicization and favoritism.

Since taking office nearly 18 months ago, Mr. Hegseth has fired or sidelined more than two dozen senior officers, including Adm. Lisa Franchetti, who held the top Navy job before Admiral Caudle. He has also removed from promotion lists about 40 senior officers who had been selected by boards made up of their peers.

Mr. Hegseth has insisted that his actions were necessary to root out those he has described as radical ideologues. "The left captured the military quickly, and we must reclaim it at a faster pace," he wrote in his 2024 book, "The War on Warriors." "We must wage a frontal assault, a swift counterattack, in broad daylight."

Admiral Caudle's promotion is a view into the flip side of Mr. Hegseth's purge.

Before the defense secretary had even taken office, he had publicly singled out Admiral Franchetti as someone he believed had been promoted solely because of her gender. She knew that if Mr. Hegseth was confirmed, she would most likely be fired.

In December 2024, Admiral Franchetti called together the Navy's four-star admirals to discuss potential replacements, officials said.

She reminded them that their most important job in the coming weeks was to put the Navy's integrity and its reputation as an apolitical institution ahead of their ambitions, according to people familiar with the meeting.

Admiral Caudle was in the room that day, and around the same time was also privately offering to help Mr. Hegseth prepare for his confirmation hearing, defense officials said.

Capt. Dave Hecht, a spokesman for Admiral Caudle, said in a statement to The New York Times that the admiral planned to limit his discussion with Mr. Hegseth to "factual, operational matters."

He said that Admiral Caudle's interactions with Mr. Hegseth always focused on military, not political, issues.

A Pentagon directive counsels active-duty troops to avoid "partisan political activity."

After Mr. Hegseth fired Admiral Franchetti, senior Navy officials, led by the service's acting secretary, assembled a list of the three officers they believed were best qualified to fill her position. Admiral Caudle was not on it. Navy leaders thought he was better suited to lead the U.S. Strategic Command, which oversees the country's nuclear arsenal, the officials said.

Mr. Hegseth reviewed the Navy's list in a meeting with senior staff members.

"Where's Caudle?" he asked, according to officials with knowledge of the meeting.

Mr. Hegseth's chief of staff said he was not familiar with the admiral. Mr. Hegseth instructed him to discuss the matter with Mr. Parlatore, officials said.

Mr. Parlatore, who had left the Navy a decade earlier, had recently been commissioned by Mr. Hegseth as a Navy reservist and member of the Navy's Judge Advocate General's Corps.

As a civilian attorney, he had represented naval officers and sailors in a series of high-profile cases. His clients included Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher, a Navy SEAL who in 2019 was charged with killing a wounded prisoner in Iraq. Chief Gallagher was ultimately acquitted of nearly all the charges against him.

Mr. Parlatore also helped Mr. Hegseth negotiate a $50,000 settlement with a woman who had accused him of raping her in 2017. And he had represented Mr. Trump in matters related to the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol and classified documents found at Mr. Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort.

Mr. Parlatore had not met Admiral Caudle, but told Mr. Hegseth that he had heard good things about him, officials said.

Other staff members recalled Admiral Caudle's eager outreach during Mr. Hegseth's confirmation process.

In late March, Mr. Hegseth selected Admiral Caudle to lead the Navy. In a statement, Sean Parnell, the chief Pentagon spokesman, said that Mr. Hegseth "interviewed many candidates for the position and ultimately found Admiral Caudle to be the right fit."

"Every decision is based strictly on merit," Mr. Parnell added.

Before Admiral Caudle's nomination could be sent to the White House, the inspector general had to complete its investigation, which had languished for more than a year. Sailors recalled Admiral Caudle telling them in an informal conversation at an awards banquet that the Pentagon's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program needed to focus more on helping troops avoid risky behavior.

According to the sailors, Admiral Caudle offered examples: If he strode naked through the forest, coated in honey, he should not be surprised if he were attacked by a bear, officials said. If he wore gold chains and a fancy watch on a visit to Harlem, he risked getting robbed. At least one sailor believed Admiral Caudle was blaming assault victims for provoking their attacks.

The admiral declined to comment on his remarks.

In an interview with The Times, Mr. Parlatore described his work on behalf of Mr. Caudle as routine. He identified and suggested witnesses to the inspector general, and accompanied Admiral Caudle to his interview with investigators. "The same thing I have done for hundreds of others," he said.

The inspector general's job, like a prosecutor's, is to collect evidence and offer findings. A decision to punish is made by the service member's chain of command, which includes the Navy secretary and potentially Mr. Hegseth.

Admiral Caudle took command as the chief of naval operations last summer.

RICHARD WAINWRIGHT/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

ERIC LEE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Adm. Lisa Franchetti, above left, held the U.S. Navy's top position before she was fired by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. He chose Adm. Daryl Caudle, above right, for the job.

In pivotal Senate race, Republicans hold massive cash edge

PORTLAND, MAINE

New Democratic nominee in Maine faces a major fund-raising challenge

BY BAYLISS WAGNER, LISA LERER AND THEODORE SCHLEIFER

Even before Graham Platner withdrew from Maine's Senate race in disgrace this month, he and his Democratic allies were severely outmatched in the race for cash.

Now his replacement, Troy Jackson, inherits a difficult situation: He has just over four months to erect a defense against a towering Republican super PAC apparatus that is intent on re-electing Senator Susan Collins.

Ms. Collins is relying on a web of deep-pocketed outside groups, funded largely by billionaire megadonors, to spend tens of millions of dollars on advertising promoting her and attacking the Democratic nominee. Her campaign, her allies and other groups aligned with Senate Republican leadership have already reserved about $60 million in airtime through the fall, according to the media tracking firm AdImpact.

That is far more than the roughly $24 million that Senate Democrats' main super PAC and its affiliates have allocated to ads in Maine, though more could be on the way.

With Republicans set to outspend Democrats that drastically, a bruising, asymmetrical battle is about to unfold for a seat that could be pivotal to control of the Senate.

"We're probably never going to be able to match what the Republicans are going to spend, but we've got to have a fight," said Rufus Gifford, a leading Democratic fund-raiser who hosted an event for donors to Mr. Platner in May. He added, "This is not a level playing field by any stretch of the imagination."

Mr. Jackson, a former state lawmaker and logger from rural Northern Maine, is a progressive who has railed against billionaires, has few ties to Democratic big donors and has never been a strong fund-raiser.

Democrats chose him to become their new nominee at a state party convention on Saturday. Now, he will have to build an expansive national fund-raising operation and donor list from the ground up even as he works to court voters across Maine.

"I'm going to definitely bust my ass in these next four months to make up the difference" in money, Mr. Jackson said in an interview last week with The New York Times. "And in the end, I think I'm on the right side of the issues compared to Susan Collins. So I feel very good about the race."

He estimated he would need between $40 million and $50 million, but added, "That's probably not even enough."

A FUND-RAISING MACHINE

Over nearly three decades as a senator, Ms. Collins has built a deep bench of supporters across the country. And she has had six years to prepare for a tough re-election battle.

She is slated to benefit from the support of outside groups more than any other Republican candidate this cycle, according to advertising data. Including expenditures from during the primary, the Republican ad campaign for her is currently set to cost $113 million in total.

Her allies have set up a deep-pocketed super PAC, Pine Tree Results, that is independent from those controlled by national Republican leaders.

"We're probably never going to be able to match what the Republicans are going to spend, but we've got to have a fight."

The group poured millions into a series of tough attack ads against Mr. Platner and is planning to spend about $20 million more through Election Day on television and digital ads.

"We plan to welcome Jackson to the N.F.L. quickly," said Scott Reed, who runs Pine Tree.

Amid the onslaught, Mr. Platner had criticized Pine Tree for relying on out-of-state donors. Of the $16.5 million in contributions the group has received, $5,000 — or 0.03 percent — came from within Maine, according to an analysis of campaign finance reports.

Ms. Collins's campaign said that the donations from outside Maine were a testament to her experience and her bipartisan record.

"She is receiving support from across the country because, in these tumultuous, highly polarized times, people recognize Senator Collins's steady, reliable presence in the Senate," Blake Kernen, a campaign spokeswoman, said in a statement.

Pine Tree has received seven-figure checks from the investor Paul Singer, the hedge fund titan Ken Griffin, the private equity chief Stephen A. Schwarzman and Jim Davis, the owner of the footwear company New Balance. None of them live in Maine, which is known as the Pine Tree State. Mr. Singer is also backing another pro-Collins super PAC called Winning for Women.

Pine Tree has raised $20 million this cycle and had $8 million left in the bank as of June 30, according to the most recent filings, while Winning for Women had nearly $700,000 on hand at that time. Ms. Collins has $12 million in her own campaign accounts, including her leadership fund, Dirigo PAC.

Overall, Ms. Collins and her allied groups collected donations from at least 79 billionaires since January 2025, according to an analysis in June by The Maine Monitor.

Senate Republicans' main super PAC, the Senate Leadership Fund, is also backing her with tens of millions of dollars. The group has released a new advertisement attacking Mr. Jackson over reports he could be ill-tempered, saying he was "like Graham Platner, but worse."

At a time of public anger at inequality, Mr. Jackson may be able to seize on Ms. Collins's support from billionaires. But allies of Ms. Collins say they have seen such attacks fail before.

"People know her — they know she doesn't live a lavish lifestyle," said Lance Dutson, a Republican political strategist who has worked for the senator on her previous campaigns. "There's just none of the trappings of what someone would see as an associate of the billionaire class."

A HIGH-DOLLAR RACE

In some ways, the Democrats' candidate switch-up in Maine could help level the playing field.

Democrats have already lobbed millions of dollars' worth of ads against Ms. Collins. But her operation will now have to devise messaging about a new opponent, after spending months planning how to hammer Mr. Platner over his many controversies.

Those scandals had made some Democratic big-dollar donors hesitant to support his campaign. Mr. Jackson can now try to bring them back into the fold.

But in Mr. Jackson's previous campaigns, he struggled to raise money. He lagged behind competitors in reported contributions for his unsuccessful primary campaigns for Congress in 2014 (he raised around $300,000) and the governor's mansion in June (he raised $1.2 million).

After Mr. Jackson's backers swept delegate elections this month, his campaign announced that it had raised $1 million in less than two weeks — a sizable number given the short timeline, but one unlikely to spook Ms. Collins.

Mr. Jackson is likely to have other help, however.

After Mr. Platner withdrew, Senate Democrats' campaign arm and the Maine Democratic Party established a fund to be transferred to the new nominee.

Mr. Jackson is also likely to lean on groups aligned with organized labor, similar to a state PAC that spent nearly $1 million in ads emphasizing his blue-collar bona fides in the governor's race.

And though Mr. Jackson told The Times last week that he would not support Senator Chuck Schumer, the minority leader, the super PAC aligned with Mr. Schumer has kept its millions of dollars in ad reservations in Maine through November.

"Leader Schumer has one message for every Democratic Senate candidate: Just win," said Allison Biasotti, Mr. Schumer's spokeswoman.

There will also be no shortage of small-dollar donors, who tend to flock to major Democratic campaigns for Senate, especially at the end. Nearly 25,000 donors have pitched in for Mr. Jackson's Senate bid so far, according to his campaign.

PLAYING CATCH-UP

Money alone does not guarantee victory for either party.

In a state like Maine, which has roughly one million registered voters and just three media markets, strategists say that huge political spending can reach a saturation point for voters. Democrats had high hopes of unseating Ms. Collins after sharply outspending her in 2020 — and she still won.

And there are plenty of signs that Ms. Collins faces an uphill climb to a sixth term in a state Mr. Trump lost in 2024, including concerns about her age and the political headwinds caused by an unpopular Republican president.

But Mr. Jackson finds himself behind in a race to define himself while lacking the infrastructure or money to do so quickly. In that void, Ms. Collins and her backers will lunge to paint him in a negative light.

Democrats have other reasons to be concerned. A Supreme Court ruling late last month that rolled back decades-old restrictions on political-party spending has raised worries in the party about even more spending by big donors.

"National donors are going to have to step up," said Mr. Gifford, the Democratic fund-raiser, adding, "When you're going to get millions of dollars spent against you, it's extremely important to define yourself before they define you."

Without his own super PAC, Mr. Jackson is also bound by a federal limit of $3,500 per donor per election, making it difficult for him to quickly match Ms. Collins's sums.

Some Maine Democrats have speculated behind the scenes about ways of filling the gap, but the options may be limited. Sara Gideon, the Democratic nominee who outspent Ms. Collins in 2020, still has nearly $2.5 million in her campaign account. Mr. Platner, despite being one of the party's strongest online fund-raisers, had just $1.7 million in the bank as of June 30.

Neither Ms. Gideon nor Mr. Platner has said anything publicly about transferring their money to Mr. Jackson, and neither answered questions from The Times about their plans.

Reid J. Epstein contributed reporting.

RYAN DAVID BROWN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZIELLO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Top, Senator Susan Collins's campaign and its Republican allies have reserved about $60 million in airtime for ads through the fall. Above, Maine Democrats quickly coalesced around Troy Jackson, a former state lawmaker and logger, after Graham Platner withdrew. Mr. Jackson has railed against billionaires and has few ties to big donors.

Business

GO NAKAMURA/REUTERS

Alibaba, China's A.I. heavyweight, is one of several companies that have started charging for access to some models. Attempts to increase revenue this way can put off customers.

Meta chief wants openness in A.I.

SAN FRANCISCO

Power over technology shouldn't be centralized, Mark Zuckerberg argues

BY MIKE ISAAC AND ELI TAN

Mark Zuckerberg came out swinging against Anthropic and OpenAI, two of the world's most valuable artificial intelligence start-ups, saying the way they developed A.I. software could lead to a centralization of power that would narrow people's access to the transformational technology.

In an interview on Tuesday with The New York Times, the 42-year-old chief executive of Meta did not call out Anthropic and OpenAI by name. But he said that if leading research labs wanted to develop A.I. technology in a tightly controlled manner — as Anthropic and OpenAI have done — it would be akin to "abandoning our values" in American tech development and stifle innovation.

"So much of the discourse from a lot of the other labs that are developing this is overwhelmingly filled with doom," Mr. Zuckerberg said. "There needs to be a voice or several voices that are bringing realism to this debate."

The comments from Mr. Zuckerberg, who rarely gives interviews to traditional news organizations, escalate a debate over how artificial intelligence software should be created that has divided Silicon Valley.

Technologists like Dario Amodei, the chief executive of Anthropic, and Sam Altman, the chief executive of OpenAI, have said some of today's leading A.I. models are too dangerous to be shared and developed without tight controls. But Microsoft, Nvidia, Google and Meta have disagreed, contending that many A.I. models must be developed largely in the open for people to advance the technology and build new businesses.

The discord heightened this month as breakthroughs in Chinese A.I. models appeared to erode the head start that American companies like Anthropic and OpenAI have enjoyed. The companies have lobbied regulators in Washington, raising concerns about Chinese open-source A.I. models.

On Friday, Jensen Huang, the chief executive of Nvidia, posted a letter supporting open-source software development, which others in Silicon Valley rallied around. This week, Mr. Huang announced a coalition to work on open-source safety and cybersecurity tools for A.I., joined by other tech giants like SpaceX and IBM.

Tech executives including Mr. Huang and Mr. Altman were expected to be in Washington this week to further make their case to the Trump administration, which is considering the issue.

Amid the battle, Mr. Zuckerberg has repeatedly argued that more people, rather than fewer, should have access to A.I. technology, a tacit criticism of Mr. Amodei and Mr. Altman.

Mr. Amodei, in particular, has called out the dangers of "alignment risk," an issue with programming A.I. in a way that is safe toward humans.

"I think a lot of people have this notion that if you build some kind of singular A.I. you can, through some idealized form of alignment, make sure it is benevolent to humanity," Mr. Zuckerberg said in the interview. "I'm personally skeptical of that path."

He instead called for "personalized superintelligence" for everyone, which would mean configuring A.I. bots to suit people's needs and desires. A central "benevolent" A.I. superpower, he argued, would be untenable because people have different views and values.

"I think it is literally impossible to have a single benevolent superintelligence that is simultaneously aligned with everyone at once," Mr. Zuckerberg said.

Representatives from Anthropic and OpenAI did not immediately respond to requests for comment. In previous statements, OpenAI has said it supports open-source software and is working with the White House on safe ways to support A.I. development.

In a blog post on Monday, Mr. Amodei said Anthropic was focused on "keeping powerful chips out of authoritarian hands, stopping industrial-scale distillation, and requiring safety testing of all sufficiently capable models, open and closed."

On Tuesday, top A.I. researchers at Anthropic, OpenAI, Meta and Google also signed an open letter titled "Pacing the Frontier," arguing for an international effort to develop technical and governance tools to slow down A.I. development for safety.

OpenAI posted the letter on social media.

(The Times has sued OpenAI and Microsoft, claiming copyright infringement of news articles. The two companies have denied the claims.)

Meta's own philosophy around A.I. development has fluctuated. For years, the company championed open-source A.I. and gave away its A.I. models for free. Last spring, after falling behind Anthropic and OpenAI in the A.I. race, Mr. Zuckerberg took action.

He invested $14.3 billion in ScaleAI, an A.I. start-up, and hired its founder, Alexandr Wang, to revamp Meta's A.I. division, which was renamed Meta Superintelligence Labs. Meta spent billions to assemble a team of all-star A.I. researchers around Mr. Wang, and they began developing an A.I. model that was not open but closed.

JASON HENRY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Mark Zuckerberg, Meta's chief executive, said much of the discourse around A.I. was "overwhelmingly filled with doom."

The move gave Meta the potential to sell access to new models for more revenue. This month, it began selling access to its latest A.I. model, Muse Spark, for the first time. Meta also continues to develop open-source models.

Mr. Zuckerberg has long believed that A.I. will transform society in positive ways that are yet to be understood. This month, Meta released an advertising campaign in the United States saying that investing in A.I. tools and releasing them broadly meant the company was "betting on people."

The Wall Street Journal published an opinion piece by Mr. Zuckerberg this week in which he criticized "centralizing" of A.I. power and said he believed in "individual empowerment, invention and balance of power." In the article, he did not name Anthropic and OpenAI.

In Tuesday's interview, Mr. Zuckerberg acknowledged that the A.I. debate was contentious and noted that talks with different parties in Silicon Valley and Washington had been productive.

"I don't know if the goal is to have everyone agree on everything," he said. "Almost by definition, if you believe what I do, you don't need to convince everyone of everything."

Looking back over the course of technology, he said democratization of tech tools had tended to eventually win out.

"I believe the general arc of the industry has been toward more openness and putting the power of tech into more people's hands, not fewer," he said.

Breakthroughs, but no profits

China's A.I. powerhouses gain ground in tech, but financial losses are large

BY MEAGHAN TOBIN

China's leading technology companies have been steadily releasing artificial intelligence models that perform nearly as well as the best systems in the world. But they are all facing the same problem: overcoming the punishing economics behind the technology.

Chinese A.I. companies have tried different approaches to bring in enough money to sustain the enormous expense of building A.I. systems.

Start-ups like DeepSeek and Moonshot AI have raised billions from investors. Alibaba, China's A.I. heavyweight, has started charging users for access to its best models. ByteDance, TikTok's parent company and an A.I. powerhouse, launched a tiered pricing system, hoping to get people to pay more for using its most advanced models.

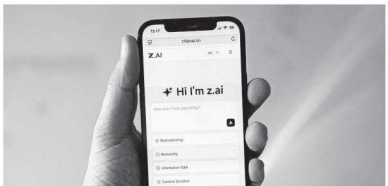
To build state-of-the-art A.I. models, A.I. companies constantly need to buy powerful computer chips — enough to build the models, more to test improvements and still more to ensure they can perform for users all over the world. The companies also need to build or rent space in data centers that house all this computing power.

Chinese A.I. companies are not the only ones confronting these tough economics. Their giant rivals in Silicon Valley, from OpenAI and Anthropic to Google, are also investing more in A.I. than they are earning from it.

For Chinese companies, the challenge is compounded by a central paradox of the country's approach to A.I. development. Most of China's leading A.I. systems are open source or open weight. That has accelerated their development — the entire industry gains when every company shares its work in public.

China's open-source approach has spawned a crowded field of innovative and intensely competitive start-ups all offering systems at low cost.

So attempts to increase revenue by charging more for access to certain models can scare away customers. Price-conscious Chinese consumers — businesses and individuals alike — are quick to hop across platforms in search of inexpensive A.I. tools.



RAUL ARIANO/BLOOMBERG

The Chinese A.I. start-up Z.ai attracted Silicon Valley developers with its low-cost models. Its revenue more than doubled last year, but it still lost nearly $700 million.

While China's A.I. companies are searching for sustainable business models, spending is high and revenue low, said Richard Lin, a vice president at the Silicon Valley company Datastrato.

"In two or three years, we will still be trying to figure out how large models can earn money," he said.

Offering low prices has helped the Chinese firms gain users, including in Silicon Valley, where many companies depend on the more affordable systems. Yet Chinese companies have struggled to translate huge numbers of global users into profits.

Last month, the Chinese start-up Z.ai released a model, GLM-5.2, that it said was nearly as powerful as Anthropic's best. Many software developers and start-ups in Silicon Valley quickly started using it, in part because it was cheaper than the American systems.

Z.ai's models improved and became more popular, and the company's revenue more than doubled last year. But Z.ai lost nearly $700 million.

When it went public in Hong Kong, Z.ai said it planned to use most of the money to improve its models, largely by acquiring more chips. A few weeks after the stock listing, Z.ai said it was looking for partners to share computing power resources and apologized after users complained about slow service.

"Open models are a powerful distribution strategy, but they are not a complete business model," said Wei Sun, a principal A.I. analyst at Counterpoint Research in Beijing. "An I.P.O. can finance the next training cycle, but it cannot by itself create sustainable economics."

This month, Moonshot released a model called Kimi K3, which the company said performed better than models from OpenAI and Anthropic did on some tasks. But within two days the company was forced to announce that it needed to stop accepting new users because it couldn't get enough computer chips to serve them.

China's A.I. industry has faced years of U.S. trade restrictions that confine its ability to buy the world's most powerful chips. To get around these limitations, many Chinese companies rent remote access to data centers outside China stocked with advanced chips.

But Chinese A.I. start-ups have far less money to buy computing power than their wealthy American rivals.

Last month, DeepSeek held one of China's most anticipated funding rounds, raising money from investors including the internet giant Tencent, the battery maker CATL and the country's state investment fund for artificial intelligence. DeepSeek raised $7.5 billion. In May, Moonshot raised $2 billion.

By comparison, Anthropic raised $65 billion in May alone.

Chinese tech firms have far less capital, but U.S. tech executives and investors worry that China's open-source push threatens to upend the economics of A.I. production.

Chinese A.I. start-ups say years of export controls have pushed them to use chips as efficiently as possible, potentially challenging the idea that has motivated much of global A.I. investment: that making cutting-edge A.I. systems will always require increasing investment in more chips and data centers.

Now, a debate is raging in the United States that could make it even harder for Chinese A.I. companies to earn money.

Leading Silicon Valley companies including Anthropic and OpenAI have claimed that Chinese firms improperly harvested data from their A.I. systems to accelerate the development of the Chinese models. Some American tech companies and investors want Washington to limit access to Chinese open-source models, saying they could be a threat in the wrong hands.

Kevin Xu, the founder of Interconnected Capital, a hedge fund that invests in A.I. technologies, said, "Many Silicon Valley start-ups rely on open-weight models to both customize their product and also not have to pay OpenAI and Anthropic their high prices."

These American tech companies have been an important source of revenue for many Chinese A.I. firms. If they are cut out of it, they risk losing that.

Xinyun Wu contributed research.

E.U. divided over ban on imports from Israeli settlements

Some nations are pushing for action, whereas others seek to avoid confrontation

BY EPHRAT LIVNI AND FATIMA ABDULKARIM

The European Union is debating a ban on imports from Israeli settlements, but member states are divided, reflecting deep disagreements over whether and how to confront Israel as it cements claims on occupied Palestinian territory.

Superficially, the fight is technical, based on procedural questions. But political observers say this is actually a proxy battle over how to handle Israel at a time of growing dismay with its policies among the European public and some leaders.

"Legal argument is being deployed to launder what is really a political and diplomatic reluctance to act," said Alberto Alemanno, a law professor in Paris who arranged a letter joined by dozens of experts outlining legal grounds for a ban.

More than three million Palestinians live in the West Bank, along with over 500,000 Israelis who settled there after Israel captured the territory in the 1967 war. Palestinians envision it becoming part of a future state, an objective that European governments aim to advance but Israel's government rejects.

In recent years, Israeli government approvals of West Bank settlements and other official actions have led to an unprecedented expansion of Israel's claims on the land, as military operations have displaced many Palestinians and settler violence has risen.

The International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion in 2024 saying that Israel's occupation and settlements are illegal, calling on countries to prevent trade that may "assist in the maintenance of the illegal situation."

Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium and others have taken steps to restrict or ban Israeli products from occupied territories, like agricultural goods, wine and construction materials. These countries are among those pushing for the E.U. to take strong action to limit the import of settlement products.

MUSSA QAWASMA/REUTERS

Palestinians harvesting olives near Bethlehem in the West Bank last October. This month, Israel allocated more than $430 million for 43 new settlements in the West Bank.

Germany, by contrast, says it favors dialogue over action that risks inflaming Israelis ahead of their national election in October. Germany also has what it calls "a special relationship" with Israel, rooted in the history of the Holocaust, and the German government is traditionally reluctant to take measures that may isolate Israel.

Italy and the Czech Republic are likewise opposed to a confrontational approach and say E.U. restrictions on settlement products can be adopted only if they receive unanimous approval by member states.

But Kaja Kallas, the E.U.'s top diplomat, who is pressing for strong action, is among those who say that just a qualified majority — approval by at least 55 percent of member states representing 65 percent of the bloc's population — would be needed. The European Commission this month proposed several possible measures, including tariffs and a ban on goods produced at Israeli settlements in occupied territory.

Hugh Lovatt, a senior fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, calls the focus by some member states on unanimity "a distraction — and arguably an excuse for inaction."

But European countries have been able to agree on some actions related to Israeli activities in the West Bank. In May, the 27 E.U. members unanimously imposed sanctions on people and organizations they said facilitate "settler violence and serious human rights abuses against Palestinians" in the West Bank.

"Clearly Israel's relations with Europe are under unprecedented strain, including with countries that have long been very supportive," Mr. Lovatt said.

Still, some member states remain reluctant to sanction Israeli government ministers or to take steps against Israel itself.

European leaders face conflicting pressures, including public calls for action, the risk of drawing Israeli ire and

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BUSINESS

Britain debates alternative economic model

LONDON

Ownership of utilities in spotlight as new leader vows more 'public control'

BY ESHE NELSON

Andy Burnham, Britain's new prime minister, began his leadership with a full-throttled rebuke of the past 40 years of British policymaking. Rejecting the sweep of privatization introduced by Margaret Thatcher, Mr. Burnham said he would bring in a new political and economic model.

A central pillar of that approach will be more government control over utilities and services that were handed over to private companies starting in the late 1980s, like water and energy.

Mr. Burnham was ushered into office extraordinarily quickly. A little over a month ago, he was the mayor of Greater Manchester in the northwest of England, without a seat in Parliament. Now he is vowing to remake Britain, and little is known about the details of his economic agenda.

One result has been the start of a vivid debate about privatization — whether it went too far and how best to fix its failings. Mr. Burnham calls for more "public control" of services, not necessarily government ownership. But the vagueness of the term has left a lot open to interpretation and speculation. It has come to encompass everything from a socialist turn into widespread nationalization to tighter regulation of utilities.

Mr. Burnham said that later this year he would release a 10-year plan to increase public control and reduce the cost of essential services like water, housing, energy and transportation.

Mr. Burnham should create the "feeling that the state is back and it's on our side," said Danny Sriskandarajah, the chief executive of the New Economics Foundation, a progressive British research group. "That's what's been missing."

JOSEPH HORTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Paddington Station in London, above. Andy Burnham, Britain's prime minister, below left, has criticized the privatization of public services that took place in the 1980s. His predecessor, Keir Starmer, had started bringing the country's railways under public control. Thames Water, below right, is burdened by debt and facing possible temporary nationalization.

POOL PHOTO BY RICHARD POHLE

SAM BUSH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

ARGUMENTS ABOUT OWNERSHIP

As prime minister in the 1980s, Ms. Thatcher fundamentally reshaped the British economy. Her 11-year tenure increased private homeownership, greatly enhanced the financial services industry and diminished manufacturing. Her government also privatized huge segments of the economy, including energy, telecommunications, airports and water.

The resulting companies were floated on the stock market. The idea was to bring about mass public ownership through these shares, but many companies ended up in private hands and most were delisted from stock exchanges.

The forceful opening of the British economy led to wealth creation and prosperity. It also wrought regional inequality through deindustrialization in the north and accelerated the shift to an economy more dependent on financial and business services, which were clustered in London and the southeast.

"In the 1980s, Britain took some wrong turns," Mr. Burnham said on July 20, standing in front of No. 10 Downing Street, just moments after he became prime minister. "Political power was centralized, economic power privatized, large parts of the country deindustrialized, and they still haven't recovered."

But is ownership really what makes the difference in how well a utility or service, like trains, is run? Economists and policy strategists aren't decided either way.

Mathew Lawrence, the founder of Common Wealth, a British think tank, who has presented his ideas to Mr. Burnham's team, is in favor of some public ownership.

"Public ownership and public provision are not panaceas, they are tools," he said, and shouldn't be seen as "magic wands that fix everything."

But previous periods of nationalization, such as after World War II, had notable successes, including the building of more public housing and the transformation of the energy system from an inefficient patchwork of thousands of companies into a few centralized and regional systems.

Ownership is important because it enables profits to be returned to the government, Mr. Lawrence added, and then a choice can be made about how to spend them in the public interest.

Others are less convinced. Diane Coyle, a professor of public policy at the University of Cambridge, said that how services were regulated and the sectors were organized to create competition mattered more than if they were run by private firms or public agencies.

There's a strong argument, she said, for a system where state-owned companies compete with private enterprises. That way, public ownership can lead to diversity in business models, more competition and more informed oversight.

"People obsess too much about ownership," said Ms. Coyle, who has influenced policymaking in Manchester and at the national level. "It isn't the ownership, it's the structure of the market that makes a difference in the kind of outcomes for consumers and citizens."

SOME TAKEOVERS UNDERWAY

More nationalization is already underway in Britain. On several occasions it has been an act of last resort.

Under the previous prime minister, Keir Starmer, the government had started to bring the railway system under full public ownership and was pulling more than a dozen train operators into one public company, Great British Railways. Several operators were already nationalized by the previous Conservative government for financial or operational failings.

One of Mr. Starmer's last acts as prime minister was to complete the nationalization of British Steel, which operates the country's last blast furnaces for making steel. It seized control of the company last year after its Chinese owner, Jingye, appeared to be trying to shut down operations.

Water companies could be next. In the late 1980s, Britain went further than almost anywhere else in the world when it privatized the water authorities of England and Wales, selling off assets such as pipes, land and reservoirs. After decades of private ownership, much of the county is fed up with rising bills, pollution and chronic underinvestment. A few years ago, every major water and wastewater company was under investigation for dispensing sewage in rivers and other waterways.

The poster child of the failure is Thames Water, the country's largest water company. Weighed down by enormous debts, it has been on the brink of financial collapse for years and faces the possibility it will be temporarily nationalized. It currently has only enough cash to last until the end of the year. Last month, the government rejected a rescue plan by Thames Water creditors, which include the large American funds Apollo Global Management and Elliott Management. Mr. Burnham will need to decide what to do about Thames Water.

"It isn't the ownership, it's the structure of the market that makes a difference."

For some, it could be a test case for the rest of the industry. GMB Union, one of Britain's largest labor organizations, has called on Mr. Burnham to "take decisive action and nationalize Thames Water."

POLITICS, NOT JUST ECONOMICS

It's one thing for the government to prop up operators of essential utilities offering substandard services or in financial distress. It's another entirely to bring companies and services into public ownership on the argument that it's a superior model.

For some services, the public has taken a side. More than 80 percent of Britons believe water companies should be run in the public sector, and 70 percent say the same for energy, according to recent polling.

Still, widespread nationalization of services is unlikely.

Mr. Burnham said he wanted to be a "business-friendly" leader. His method of public control is likely to be influenced by changes he made to the bus system in Manchester, where a franchise model allows a local authority to set the routes, fares and other conditions, while private companies bid on contracts to operate the service. And so, in his 10-year plan, private companies are expected to play an important role.

"The state has withdrawn too far on the basic essentials," said Mr. Sriskandarajah of the New Economics Foundation. "But its re-entry doesn't need to be 20th-century socialism."

Salad parasite ripe for conspiracy theories

Conjecture spreads online about politics of company linked to outbreak of illness

BY TIFFANY HSU

The public discussion around the cyclospora outbreak, the largest in U.S. history, initially focused on food safety: How could the parasite be killed? What foods were affected?

Then, suddenly, social media chatter lurched into conjecture about politics.

Much of the online discussion turned — in the span of a single day — to whether the Trump administration was meddling in the investigation that linked the outbreak to the food producer Taylor Farms, which donated $1 million in March to a super PAC for President Trump and has a history of supporting the Republican Party.

And days after the government first linked Taylor Farms to the illnesses, the politicized narrative continued to make up a significant portion of the talk of the outbreak. More than 62 percent of the online conversation about Taylor Farms over the past week referred to the claims, according to research from PeakMetrics, an analytics company.

The administration firmly denied any connection. The Department of Health and Human Services said on X that "nothing influences our decisions except science and the safety of the American people." But the government's conflicting announcements have helped fuel the speculation.

Narratives, particularly sensational ones, often take root online and spread quickly.

The cyclospora situation, however, has been especially fertile ground: a public health emergency playing out in a country with waning faith in the public health apparatus, involving close ties between an implicated produce company and a president long accused of self-dealing.

MICHELLE V. AGINS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Social media discussion of Taylor Farm's links to conservatives followed changing statements from officials about the presence of cyclospora in the company's produce.

To disinformation experts, the speed with which speculation about political machinations overtook fact-finding conversations demonstrated how fully primed the online ecosystem has become to accept rumor and falsehoods.

"There is massive distrust right now in these institutions, and now you're layering on top of that the conspiracy theories that emerge so incredibly quickly on social media," said Timothy Caulfield, a professor studying health misinformation at the University of Alberta in Canada.

Health officials across multiple states have recorded more than 11,000 confirmed or suspected cyclospora infections this summer, but the true scale of the outbreak is difficult to discern. The parasite, transmitted through tainted food and water, causes symptoms that can take days or weeks to emerge, making its origins difficult to trace.

"There is massive distrust right now in these institutions, and now you're layering on top of that the conspiracy theories."

Health officials publicly linked Taylor Farms to the outbreak on July 16. Two days later, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said a test of shredded iceberg lettuce that had been processed by Taylor Farms de Mexico found cyclospora. A day after that, however, the agency said that the finding was actually a false positive. Taylor Farms, which had issued a voluntary recall of lettuce from 27 states, said that the F.D.A. had apologized. The agency said it hadn't, at least not officially, and added that there was still strong evidence tying the producer to the outbreak.

As the public back-and-forth unfolded, social media users also discovered the $1 million donation from Taylor Farms' corporate parent to MAGA Inc., one of the main super PACs supporting the president. The company recently hired Mr. Trump's former deputy director of White House personnel.

Taylor Farms executives met with officials from the White House and the F.D.A. the same day the company was first linked to the outbreak. There, they sought to distance the company from it.

Taylor Farms' links to conservatives led people online to claim, without evidence, that the Trump administration had a hand in the F.D.A.'s walking back its test result — purportedly as a quid pro quo for the company's financial backing. Some of the posts were viewed hundreds of thousands of times. (PeakMetrics said in a blog post that a third of the initial references to the rumors seemed to originate from bot accounts.)

Kush Desai, a spokesman for the White House, said in an email that "any notion that the White House or Trump administration would ever compromise on the health and safety of the American people is absolutely false."

Taylor Farms did not directly address the online rumors but said in a statement that it would "continue to be transparent as more information becomes available" and that as of July 19, no tested samples of its produce had been confirmed positive for cyclospora.

Scientists have said that false positives are common when testing for the pathogen, a difficult process that they said had most likely been undermined by cuts to federal surveillance programs as well as funding limitations and staffing shortages at state and local public health departments.

E.U. divided over imports from Israeli settlements

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potential repercussions from the Trump administration for acting against Israel, he said.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy, for example, is doing a balancing act, he said. Italy is insisting that E.U. restrictions on settlement products receive unanimous backing from member states while she is also calling on the bloc to rethink its relations with Israel.

E.U. ambassadors met last week to discuss possible measures to pressure Israel over settlements ahead of a summer break but did not reach any agreement. No real movement is expected until at least October when the Foreign Affairs Council is slated to meet, said Lema Nazeeh, a policy analyst and international lawyer based in Brussels.

Danny Danon, Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, said in response to questions that the E.U. proposals are "both misguided and counterproductive." He said they were part of broader global efforts to isolate Israel, diverting attention from threats to Israeli and international security. The proposals fail to recognize that the Israeli and Palestinian economies are intertwined and also risk harming Palestinians, he said.

Israel and the E.U. have robust trade relations and exchanged nearly $50 billion in goods last year, according to the European Commission. Israeli goods are entitled to preferential European tariff treatment. But for more than 20 years, products from Israeli settlements, an estimated $300 million in exports to the bloc annually, have been excluded from the arrangement.

E.U. policy requires Israeli exporters to provide postal codes showing where goods originate, but the burden is on the European authorities to then check the source and treat settlement products differently.

This approach has led to confusion and deception, according to a recent report from the nonprofit group Global Echo that examined agricultural export and other records over nearly a decade, and found that European consumers were being "systematically misled about the origins of settlement products."

Emily Schaeffer Omer-Man, a human rights lawyer and the group's founder, said a trade ban was "one of the most direct ways Europe can take action to curb the Israeli settlement enterprise that is accelerating."

This month, Israel allocated more than $430 million for 43 new settlements in the West Bank. The far-right finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, touted the move as just one way to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state there.

Amal Jadou Shakaa, the ambassador for Palestine's Mission to the E.U., is pressing for a ban on settlement trade, saying it is the only way to bring E.U. policy into compliance with international law.

Ziad Anabtawi, founder of Al'Ard Group in the West Bank city of Nablus, which exports Palestinian agricultural products, said the growers he works with face increasingly difficult conditions. As a result of Israeli actions, he said, West Bank resources like water are diverted, access to land is increasingly blocked, and trees and harvests are being destroyed, while settlers are claiming more Palestinian land.

Mr. Anabtawi said his focus was "not on politics but on the ability of Palestinian producers to operate, invest and compete under fair, transparent and predictable conditions." E.U. measures to pressure Israel on settlements would underscore "the importance of responsible business practices and respect for people's rights," he said.

Opinion

‘The Odyssey’ gives us the hero we deserve

The new Odysseus is a halfway hero: he wrestles with the problems he creates. That makes him a perfect figure for our modern moment.

B.D. McClay

ANNA MALINA

Some people are going to tell you that the problem with Christopher Nolan’s “The Odyssey” is that it’s about modern people, not ancient people. Not me. It is about modern people, but so is everything else made by modern people. If you want to encounter the ancient world, you have to open a book. (Homer is available in several translations; I like Richmond Lattimore’s.)

Other people are going to tell you that the problem with Mr. Nolan’s “The Odyssey” is that he’s using an ancient text to revisit his own preoccupations: heroism, guilt, memory and the nature of time. Not me. I like an artist who’s not afraid to keep gnawing at the same bone.

No, for me the problem with Mr. Nolan’s “The Odyssey” is something else. It’s Odysseus.

To refresh briefly for those who don’t remember the story and haven’t seen the movie: Homer’s two epic poems, the “Iliad” and the “Odyssey,” follow the story of the Trojan War, when the abduction of Helen, the wife of Menelaus, triggers a huge conflict. The Greeks lay siege to Troy for 10 years, with great losses on both sides, and finally achieve victory when Odysseus tricks the Trojans into bringing a horse full of soldiers into the city. Odysseus, sailing home in victory, then angers Poseidon, the god of the sea, delaying his homecoming by another decade. When he finally makes it back, he discovers his home is full of suitors courting his wife, Penelope, and plotting the demise of their son, Telemachus. Penelope has cleverly kept the suitors at bay through trickery, but she’s been betrayed by some of her servants and cannot hold out much longer.

One thing that may strike contemporary readers of Homer is that Odysseus is one of a handful of epic heroes whose motivations actually make sense to us. He doesn’t want to be in Troy; he wants to be home. He is devious and clever without being an out-and-out scoundrel, and he’s generally motivated by curiosity and a thirst for knowledge.

In Mr. Nolan’s hands, however, wily Odysseus becomes a different, if still recognizable, type: the halfway hero. He’s a man who in some way fails to be a father, a man who dirties himself in the name of a higher cause but then discovers that the cause wasn’t worth it, a man with the power to change the world but who, in the end, either fails to do so or makes the world worse.

Like J. Robert Oppenheimer, the subject of Mr. Nolan’s previous film, this halfway hero seems protected from self-knowledge, either through culpable naïveté or blinding arrogance. Mr. Nolan’s Odysseus, for instance, is shocked that once he gets the Greeks into Troy, his comrades loot it and kill the inhabitants. He plucks his bow while hunting out of a sense of sportsmanship and, when his ships set sail to go home, he decides not to take provisions from Troy because, he says, they’ve taken enough from the city already.

This is, as mentioned, an Odysseus for modern people, and modern people struggle with the idea of true heroes. A figure who identifies what needs to be done and then does it without tremendous inner conflict? What’s the point of that? Such a person will make most modern audiences only feel like failures. Perhaps contemporary viewers don’t trust the idea of a sharp, decisive leader, or perhaps the notion of doing something without feeling bad about it seems inherently villainous to them. In contemporary politics, Americans tend to alternate between people who tell us nothing can be done and people who swear everything can be done, both of which disappoint in their own ways. So Mr. Nolan’s Odysseus, who struggles after doing something that turns out to be the wrong thing, feels like a particu-

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A blunt warning for Israel

Jewish terrorism is a menace to Palestinians and a threat to Zionism itself.

Bret Stephens

Because Israel is routinely the victim of double standards — Will Zohran Mamdani ever make a personal cause of denouncing his native Uganda for criminalizing homosexuality? Or tell a human-rights malefactor like Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, that he, too, isn’t welcome in New York? — it’s tempting for the Jewish state’s stalwart defenders, including me, to downplay its failings.

That goes especially when we see the country having to defend its legitimacy against scoundrels. Or when allegations made against it later prove sloppily reported or entirely unfounded. Or when the chorus of condemnation is loud enough already without lending our voices to it.

But anyone who cares about Israel’s well-being shouldn’t be silent about anti-Palestinian settler terrorism in the West Bank and the nothing-much-to-see-here policy of Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister. That’s not only because the terrorism is a menace to Palestinian lives and property, or an affront to Jewish ethics, or a stain on Israel’s reputation — though it’s all those things. It’s also a direct threat to Israel’s security and statehood, and thus to Zionism itself.

That’s the point of a public letter to President Trump, issued Sunday by Matan Vilnai, a retired deputy chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces, on behalf of an organization that includes hundreds of retired senior Israeli officers.

“Whereas our security agencies excel in dealing with Hamas and other West Bank Palestinian terror groups, they are severely constrained when it comes to Jewish terrorists,” the letter notes. “It is no secret that certain members of our current government orchestrate much of this chaos, including by shielding their followers — who are armed and driven by messianic impulses — from the law and its enforcement.”

“Unless arrested swiftly and decisively,” the letter bluntly warns, “escalating violence in the West Bank is poised to ignite the region and carries severe ramifications for both Israeli security and U.S. regional interests.”

That reality was again brought home last week, when extremist settlers went on a rampage in several Palestinian villages, reportedly setting fire to a home and two mosques, attacking a stonecutting factory and committing other acts of outright terrorism. That followed an incident in which four Palestinians and two Israelis were killed after a confrontation involving a group of Israelis who, without prior coordination, had trespassed into an area under Palestinian civil control.

This sort of episode has become routine. As The Times of Israel reports, “the I.D.F. recorded 867 incidents of nationalistic crime and settler violence in 2025.” That’s up from 682 the previous year.

Netanyahu’s answer to all this, as he told CNN’s Dana Bash, is that the violence is the work of about 150 “juvenile delinquents” and that he doesn’t accept “vigilantism.” But it’s preposterous to think that a government that can assassinate a Hamas leader in a Tehran guesthouse finds itself unable to contain a wave of Jewish thuggery. If the prime minister wanted to end the problem, he could. Like Bartleby, he would prefer not to.

SAMAR HAZBOUN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

That’s largely because his Likud Party depends on the parliamentary support of extremist settlers led by Itamar Ben-Gvir, the minister of national security, and Bezalel Smotrich, the finance minister, and Netanyahu has learned to stay atop Israeli politics by never letting go of his right flank.

In an interview, Eran Shamir-Borer, who spent many years in the I.D.F.’s Military Advocate General’s Corps and is now with the Israel Democracy Institute (on whose advisory board I sit), listed for me the specific decisions by Netanyahu’s cabinet that have brought Israel to this pass. Chief among them is Defense Minister Israel Katz’s refusal to use administrative detention as a legal tool to rein in suspected Jewish terrorists. David Zini, the current head of Israel’s internal security service, avoids the term “Jewish terror” in favor of the euphemism “frictions.” And Ben-Gvir is himself a product of the same milieu that produced the rampaging settlers.

“Everyone hears the music,” Shamir-Borer said, “and it legitimizes this kind of conduct.”

That’s what makes Vilnai’s letter significant, particularly during the same week that the prime minister visits Washington to meet with Trump.

STEPHENS, PAGE 11

OPINION

The New York Times
INTERNATIONAL EDITION

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The flawed environmental case against data centers

Adam Mastroianni

The war over artificial intelligence is playing out largely at local zoning board meetings. More than a dozen A.I. data center projects have been blocked or delayed because of local opposition, often motivated by environmental concerns.This month Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York signed an executive order halting construction of the state's largest data centers for one year —America's first such moratorium. According to a March Gallup poll, 71 percent of American adults said they opposed the construction of A.I. data centers in their areas, and worries about the environment were the most common reason.

I empathize with the environmental opposition to data center construction, but the arguments are shakier than they seem. The battle over where A.I. data centers are being built is really a battle over what role A.I. should play in our lives. And that's a battle that critics can win.

Many people feel that A.I. is being foisted on them by a handful of tech billionaires, in ways that are incorporeal and difficult to resist. Data centers, on the other hand, are physical structures that are subject to zoning regulations. So it makes sense that anger toward and anxiety about A.I. are manifesting as opposition to the buildings that house it. Regular people can't tell Sam Altman what to do, but they can kick him out of their towns.

Our animosity toward them is really more about our anxieties about A.I.

Data centers should be held to the same environmental standards as any other project. However, according to the researcher Andy Masley, giving up a lifetime of interacting with large language models would make a negligible difference in emissions compared with avoiding one trans-Atlantic flight or switching to a hybrid car. By his estimates, sending a prompt to ChatGPT is about as carbon-intensive as running a clothes dryer for a single second.

Communities have long tolerated wasteful projects that take up tons of space, consume lots of natural resources and serve the whims of wealthier people. They're called golf courses and backyards. The 14,000 golf courses across the United States used nearly 550 billion gallons of water in 2020, and the Environmental Protection Agency estimated that Americans use over three trillion gallons of water on "landscape irrigation" each year. No one knows for sure how much water data centers use in total. One reasonable estimate from Brian Potter at the Institute for Progress put it at about 100 billion gallons in 2023. Even if the number of data centers increases tenfold, we may still end up using less water on artificial intelligence than we use to keep our grass springy.

Everybody deserves a say in the future of A.I. We don't have to resort to NIMBYism and questionable environmental arguments to get it. Even if one community succeeds in keeping the data centers out, another community — probably a poorer and more desperate one — will let them in.

Whether we realize it or not, we are all, right now, writing the rulebook for what A.I. should be allowed to do and how humans should interact with it, through the choices we make for ourselves and the choices we praise or criticize other people for making. Every time you tell your troubles to Gemini or use Claude to write a birthday card, you're tacitly endorsing A.I. for these practices. But every time you close the chat window and think for yourself instead and every time you razz a friend for relying on ChatGPT summaries, you tighten our social norms around the use of A.I.

I am a scientist and a writer, and I'm happy to use A.I. to do my job better: I'll let it write code, fetch articles for me to read or flag errors in statistical analyses for me to investigate further. A.I. is a tool. Its purpose is to serve our purposes. If it does that well, it might be worth the water and electricity it consumes.

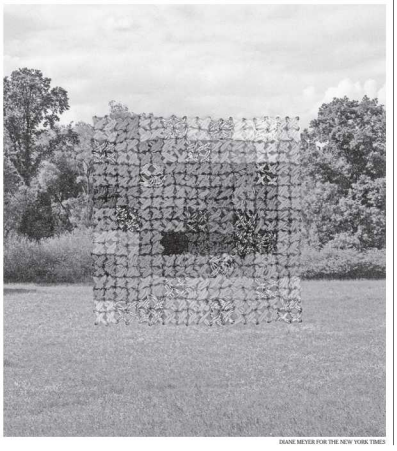
I refuse to let A.I. evolve from a tool into a partner. I won't let it write my sentences. I don't share with it my fears, hopes or dreams the way I would with a friend or lover. I don't trust its factual claims unless I can check the sources myself. I ignore it when it praises my ideas, since it can't tell the difference between insight and nonsense.

It should be humiliating to choose A.I. friendships over human ones. It should be cringe to willingly consume computer-generated slop. Trying to pass off a large language model's words as your own should be seen not just as cheating but also as loser behavior.

It might sound idealistic to suggest that every person has some influence over the future of technology. Yet this has proved true over and over again, even in the recent past. Plenty of expensive tech ventures have failed. They weren't banned, voted out or blocked by zoning laws. They failed because people refused to reward them with time and attention: The Metaverse. Quibi. Nonfungible tokens. A.I. is unlikely to disappear, but the form it takes is up to us.

Tech companies may have deep pockets, and they may be able to overcome the environmental objections to data centers. They can't dictate how we use the tools they provide. Ultimately, the role that A.I. plays in our world will be determined not so much by what is legally allowed but by what is socially acceptable.

ADAM MASTROIANNI *is an experimental psychologist and the author of the science blog Experimental History.*



DIANE MEYER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Trump's Red Scare will backfire

Jamelle Bouie

President Trump knows that he is unpopular.

This is why he has become even more obsessed with election fraud; why he fumed and rambled about the 2020 U.S. election for a prime-time audience this month and why he wants Congress to pass the SAVE America Act, a bill that — in his mind — would make it impossible for Democrats to win the midterm elections.

This is why both he and his Republican allies are throwing everything they have at Democrats in an attempt to find a message that sticks with the public, a message that could help them hold Congress for another two years. And what Trump and the Republican Party have settled on to spearhead their campaign against the Democratic Party is the threat of communism.

That's right: communism. It is unclear exactly what Trump has in mind when he says "communism," although there is no reason to think that the president could distinguish Marxism-Leninism from Maoism or Trotskyism or some other more boutique formulation. Whatever his meaning, the important point is that communism is, to the president, the single greatest threat to the safety, prosperity and integrity of the United States.

"Communism is a mortal threat to American liberty," he said at a semiquincentennial event at Mount Rushmore on July 3. "It is the greatest threat to our country, including World War I, World War II, Pearl Harbor or even 9/11."

The next day, in his Independence Day speech on the National Mall, Trump was even more emphatic about the threat communism poses. "The communist system is the opposite of the American system, and the communist system has never worked," he said. "Our warriors did not fight communism on battlefields across the world only to have that menace rear its ugly head right back here in America. We're not going to let it happen."

Following the president's direction, Republican leaders in Congress have also pledged to fight the Red menace, tying it explicitly to the Democratic Party. "The Bolshevik takeover of the Democratic Party is in full swing, and communism is on the ballot this November," Representative Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the House majority leader, said. One imagines that we'll soon see Republicans quoting Alexander Kolchak and waving the banner of the White Army.

It is clear that all of this is a response to the recent success of insurgent left-wing candidates in Democratic primaries, especially those with ties to the Democratic Socialists of America. These candidates, who won Democratic primaries — most recently Melat Kiros of Colorado — are not communists. D.S.A.'s origins, in fact, lie in part with the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, whose leadership came from the anti-communist left. But it is perhaps too much to expect American conservatives to distinguish between the many flavors of left-wing politics in the United States.

The president's attempt to drum up unfounded fears is certain to fail.

In any case, Republicans hope to wield the public's longstanding hostility to socialism as a weapon against Democratic Party politicians, whether or not they fall on the left or call themselves democratic socialists. But Americans are neither as hostile to socialism as they once were nor as positive toward capitalism as they have been in the past. More important than polling, however, is the fact that for many Americans the "communist threat" is a total abstraction. There are tens of millions of voters (this columnist included) who were young children when the Soviet Union fell. There are millions more who weren't yet born. For these Americans, communism is as much a concern as the missile gap or the contras. It is completely unresponsive to the circumstances of their lives — to their struggles with housing, health care and the overall cost of living. As a message, "communism" is out of touch with reality.

You can understand the two Trump presidencies as attempts to relive and re-enact the most atrocious moments in American history, as if the nation is led by toxic obsessives who relish the cruelty and criminality of the past and worship perpetrators as heroes — the supposedly hard men who built the country we know.

The president himself gestures toward this game of copycat when he hails Andrew Jackson or praises William McKinley as a man who made America great. And the administration itself seems to consciously want to emulate those moments of infamy and ignobility in the American past.

Of course this president, and this administration, would want to emulate the anticommunist hysterias of the 1910s and the 1950s. *Of course* he and his administration would want to resurrect the fear, bitterness and paranoia that marked the hunt for alleged subversives.

Both Trump and his movement are, as you might surmise from the slogan "Make America Great Again," fundamentally derivative. His vision of the future rests on a rotten nostalgia, and his plans for getting there were drawn from the wreckage of a shameful past.

The president's attempt to drum up a third Red Scare is certain to fail. If it matters — if it is interesting — it is only because it gives us a glimpse into the stunted imagination of a man who seems to value only the worst this country has to offer.

ALEKSEY KONDRATYEV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

When 'blame Canada' was merely a joke

FREELAND, FROM PAGE 1

United States runs a slight trade deficit with Canada in overall trade in goods and services, and a large surplus if you exclude energy, which America needs more, not less, of in the power-hungry age of artificial intelligence. At a time when Americans rank inflation and affordability as their top economic concerns, adding another tax on consumer goods — which is what tariffs are — is self-defeating.

Rehearsing the economic irrationality of the president's trade war on Canada is fun, and a self-soothing behavior for America's long-suffering northern friends, but the reality is that the economics of Mr. Trump's tariff attacks on Canada are not really the point.

This fight isn't about correcting the global financial imbalances that the president's more high-minded apologists contend are the true purpose of his trade policy. Nor is it about ending the Rust Belt deaths of despair that Mr. Trump's most articulate enablers sometimes cite as the motivation for their protectionism.

That doesn't mean that there is no method to what can look like madness. Mr. Trump's tariff offensive has a clear purpose: to demonstrate who is dominant and who must submit.

AS A U.S. COUNTERPART told me during the U.S.M.C.A. negotiations in 2018, we are 10 times bigger than you, so we should get our way 10 times more than you do. The laughably flimsy, constantly changing justifications for the president's tariffs are in fact part of the point. True power is being able to do whatever you like for whatever reason you like, or for no reason at all.

The rest of the world saw that, too, last week, when tariffs were imposed on more than 80 countries on the grounds that they were violating forced labor provisions. This from a White House that is friendlier with China than it is with its NATO allies.

You don't need to have attended meetings in the Oval Office or have a degree in international relations to see that this is what is going on. The president has been his usual, utterly transparent self.

Since Mr. Trump was elected a second time, he has repeatedly described Canada as the 51st state and our prime minister as a governor. The tariffs would not be levied, he has pointed out over and over again, if Canada were to accept absorption. After the new measures were announced this month, Mr. Trump insisted that Canada was entirely at Washington's mercy: "They need us to survive. Without us, there's no way they can survive."

As Stephen Miller, one of Mr. Trump's top advisers, explained to CNN's Jake Tapper at the beginning of this year, "We live in a world in which you can talk all you want about international niceties and everything else, but we live in a world — in the real world, Jake — that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power."

In other words, this isn't about wine sales or how Canada manages its forests or reviving U.S. manufacturing. It's about whether Canada is prepared to accept a profound change in its relationship with the United States. It's about whether Canada is willing to go from being an ally and a partner, in a relationship governed by treaties and rules, to being a vassal, subject to Washington fiat — like the Venezuela of Delcy Rodríguez, only with snowdrifts and hockey.

Nor is appeasement, which some Trump whisperers counsel, a way to avert that awful choice. Saying yes to the White House's demands just invites more of them until full submission has been established. Giving in gracefully is a less theatrical way of arriving at the same destination.

ONCE YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, it is obvious how Canada needs to react. As we did in 2018, when we responded to the first major U.S. tariff attack with dollar-for-dollar retaliation, Canada must fight back. The only thing a bully understands is strength, and Mr. Trump is keen to establish himself as the world's apex predator.

Self-defense works best when you do it as a team, and that is why my friend and former Liberal Party parliamentary colleague Mark Carney, the Canadian prime minister, has struck such a chord around the world with his call for middle powers to act together.

That's the right thing for the rest of us to do, and it is happening faster than Americans may realize. But the big unknown remains what happens in the United States.

Mr. Trump has made his view plain. His Washington doesn't have allies. It has only satraps, enemies and equals — the latter a singular group that includes just China and on some days, perhaps, Russia.

That's what makes this fight such a critical test for the United States and Americans. The countries of the world, especially America's erstwhile allies, are watching U.S. politics almost as closely as Americans themselves are.

Inside the United States, the pressing question is whether the country will remain a democracy. That matters to the rest of us, too, of course. But even if democracy eventually prevails inside the United States, America's old friends will wonder whether Trumpism permanently reshaped Washington's relationship with the rest of the world.

AMBER BRACKEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Will a post-Trump America try to rebuild genuine partnerships with its like-minded allies, based on the idea that win-win outcomes are possible and that even superpowers need to honor their treaty commitments? Or is Mr. Trump saying out loud what most Americans have really thought of their allies all along?

The United States is — understandably — so preoccupied by its internal trauma and its war of choice in the Middle East that it is easy to imagine that these other foreign relationships are second-order questions. After all, in its 250th year, the Republic really is flirting with authoritarianism.

This is about whether Canada is willing to go from being an ally and a partner, in a relationship governed by treaties and rules, to being a vassal, subject to Washington fiat.

But it would be a grave mistake for Americans to treat their place in the world as an afterthought. Because the irony is that Washington is abusing its allies at precisely the moment when it needs them the most. As the war with Iran is demonstrating, even the United States is weaker when it goes it alone. The United States will need friends even more if it hopes to hold its own against China.

IN 1944, WHEN THE UNITED STATES began to construct the Pax Americana in earnest and to invest in the postwar recovery of its allies, Washington accounted for close to half of the world's gross domestic product. Today it is still the single biggest economy, but its share has fallen to just over a quarter. China's is roughly 17 percent. But add NATO partners, along with Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, and Team Democracy is back to well over half of the global economy, accounting for as much as 60 percent.

Yet for a lot of its longtime members, that list of like-minded democracies doesn't feel like much of an alliance anymore. A Pew survey published this month showed that in most of the 36 surveyed countries, China was viewed more favorably than the United States. That included Canada, where 33 percent of respondents saw America favorably, compared with 44 percent for China. People in France, Germany and Britain took a similar view.

At one level, that's nonsense. China has an authoritarian communist government that imprisons and executes dissidents and ethnic minorities and ruthlessly punishes foreign partners deemed to be stepping out of line, as it did with Canada a few years ago, imprisoning two innocent Canadians in response to our decision to honor our extradition treaty with the United States in an unrelated case.

But given Mr. Trump's choice to play by China's rules and force smaller countries to suffer or to submit, the poll result shouldn't be much of a surprise. Superpowers, even the most benign, are always resented. That means that America's allies have all long harbored a latent strain of anti-Americanism. Those Pax Americana skeptics are gloating right now, wagging their fingers at the Atlanticists and saying they told us so.

Would-be future American leaders who recognize the value of allies and think all will be forgiven when the White House has a new occupant need to appreciate the depth of the damage being done by its current resident. They can limit the harm and create the option for the United States to make a different choice in the future by speaking out now.

If they don't, the rest of the world will be right to think that all Americans actually agree with the current bully in chief. The only winners from that outcome will be the world's despots.

Or, as the great Canadian songwriter and poet Leonard Cohen presciently put it, "You aren't going to like what comes after America."

CHRYSTIA FREELAND, *a former deputy prime minister, minister of foreign affairs and minister of finance of Canada, is an unpaid economic adviser to President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and the author of the forthcoming book, "Unreliable Boyfriend: an Insider's View of Dealing With a Chaotic Superpower, Plutocrats and Other Complicated People."*

ACPM **Printed in** Athens, Beijing, Beringen, Dubai, Frankfurt, Gallargues, Hong Kong, Islamabad, Karachi, Kathmandu, Kuala Lumpur, Lahore, London, Madrid, Milan, Nagoya, Osaka, Rome, Seoul, Taipei, Tel Aviv, Tokyo.
The New York Times Company 620 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10018-1405, NYTCo.com; The New York Times International Edition (ISSN: 2474-7149) is published six days per week. A.G. SULZBERGER, Publisher ©2026 The New York Times Company. All rights reserved. Commission Paritaire No. 0528 C83099.
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The terrifying future of immigration detention

Lauren-Brooke Eisen

In deep red Hanover County, Va., just north of Richmond, Donald Trump won 62 percent of the vote in 2024. It might have followed that the voters there supported his administration's immigration agenda. And yet, in January, Hanover County's board of supervisors opposed the Department of Homeland Security's plan to purchase and retrofit a local 550,000-square-foot warehouse as an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility. Protest was so vociferous that the Vancouver-based developer Jim Pattison Developments announced the sale would "not be proceeding."

In the early months of the new Trump administration, D.H.S. spent some $1 billion on 11 warehouses, promising to turn those inhospitable spaces into 100,000 beds for immigrants on track for deportation. But, as in Hanover County, officials and communities across the country pushed back against warehouse expansion plans, citing humanitarian concerns, pressures on local infrastructure and services, and general revulsion at the notion of hosting detention centers in their hometowns. The agency is now planning to sell or offload seven of the 11 warehouses bought in that early spending spree.

But one solution created another problem: D.H.S. will now most likely increase its existing reliance on private for-profit firms to maintain or boost immigration detention capacity. That pivot comes with its own set of humanitarian worries, raises even greater transparency and oversight concerns and makes it harder for communities to resist the effort. At the start of President Trump's second term, the government was detaining around 40,000 immigrants. Today, there are more than 65,000 detainees housed across the country in for-profit and government-owned detention centers and county jails.

Whether privately run or operated by the government, immigration detention facilities have historically had a notoriously poor track record. Reports abound of detainees being placed in overcrowded and unsanitary facilities, deprived of medical care and served contaminated food. Thirty-three people died in ICE custody last year, the highest number in two decades. ICE has already recorded 20 deaths in detention so far this year.

Several of ICE's newly purchased warehouse conversion projects were thwarted or delayed because of lawsuits arguing that the agency didn't conduct the required environmental reviews. That worked for new spaces. Now, as ICE is working with both county jails and for-profit firms to expand detention capacity by drawing on empty beds in operating facilities, or reopening facilities that already existed, it will be harder for state and local governments to credibly argue that a town's infrastructure can't handle the influx of people.

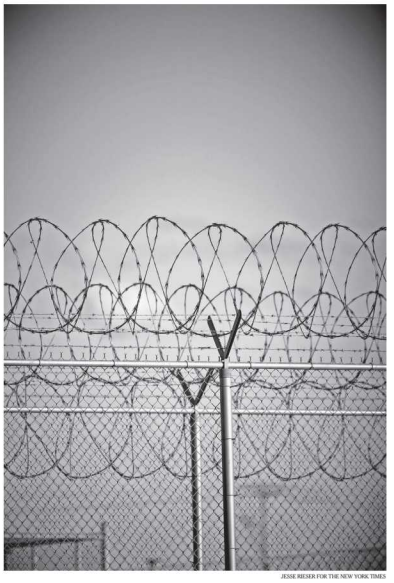
Further, for-profit firms are generally not required to directly comply with the Freedom of Information Act. That means that when a family member or journalist is looking for information about a detainee, alive or dead, legal hurdles can stand in the way. FOIA applies specifically to federal government agencies. When it comes to information or communications that remain proprietary to a private company, the public cannot compel it to provide those materials.

Privatizing U.S. prisons shields them from public scrutiny.

When journalists and others do receive documents through the federal government's FOIA mechanism, the materials are often significantly redacted. It is already challenging for family members or private counsel to track down or even confirm the presence of a detainee, let alone his or her status, in this immigration detention system.

For-profit prison companies like GEO Group and CoreCivic — as well as local counties — have long contracted with the federal government to build and operate detention centers and transport detainees from one location to another. ICE is a significant source of revenue for these two companies: GEO Group reported that ICE made up 48 percent of its revenue for 2025; CoreCivic reported that ICE accounted for 35 percent of its total revenue that same year.

In February 2025, the federal government awarded a 15-year contract to GEO Group to house ICE detainees at its 1,000-bed Delaney Hall facility in New Jersey. Administration officials also contracted with CoreCivic to reopen a family detention facility in Dilley, Texas, that can hold 2,400 people. In March of this year, CoreCivic began receiving detainees at its newly opened Midwest Regional Reception Center in Leavenworth, Kan., which has the capacity to hold 1,033 people. Detainees at both the family detention facility in Texas and the facility in New Jersey have reported inhumane conditions and contaminated food. Both groups have disputed these claims, and have said that detainees have access to medical care and meals that adhere to religious diets, among other amenities.



JESSE RIESER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

"CoreCivic is committed to partnering with the federal government to help meet their goals and objectives," CoreCivic's senior director of public affairs, Ryan Gustin, wrote to me last month by email in response to questions about the federal government's warehouse strategy and his perspective on the company's ability to increase bed capacity to help meet the government's demand. He noted that CoreCivic was not involved in the warehouse purchases and that the company has worked with the federal government for more than four decades. "We routinely engage with all our government partners on ways to deliver value to the taxpayer, and we welcome those conversations," he said. GEO Group referred me to ICE for my questions.

There are some ways for a concerned public to address transparency and oversight issues. In 2017, the California legislature passed a law requiring the state's Department of Justice to review and report on conditions of confinement at civil immigration detention facilities across the state. Other states should take California's lead. This month, D.H.S. bought two California detention centers from CoreCivic for a combined $1.5 billion. CoreCivic will continue to manage the facilities, but now that the federal government owns the detention centers there could be legal challenges about state oversight.

At the national level, Congress should drastically expand the information that private prison companies must disclose, giving the public much better insight into the state of these facilities and the contracts behind them. The idea already exists in the Private Prison Information Act, a piece of legislation that has been introduced multiple times over the past two decades without success. The bill would require private prison companies to be subject to the same transparency requirements as the federal government when those companies are contracting with the federal government to hold federal prisoners or detainees.

Selling many of the recently purchased warehouses won't dismantle the administration's immigration detention agenda. And increasing reliance on for-profit firms comes with the dark possibility that we will know even less about what is happening to immigrants. But opening immigration detention practices to scrutiny is one of the most important ways to ensure that vulnerable people are being treated humanely.

LAUREN-BROOKE EISEN *is the senior director of the Justice Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at N.Y.U. Law School. She's also the author of "Inside Private Prisons: An American Dilemma in the Age of Mass Incarceration."*

FROM READERS

Israel and the genocide claim

Re "Entering a new era of genocide" by Omer Bartov (Opinion, July 22):

Dr. Bartov believes that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza akin to the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide of 1915. Israel can be accused of war crimes, but not genocide. The Nazi purpose in the Holocaust was the extermination of the Jews of Europe and beyond, leading to the murder of some six million people. The Young Turks' purpose in the Armenian genocide was the destruction of the Armenian population, leading to the killing of some 1.5 million people.

The current Israeli government is not intent on exterminating or destroying the Palestinian population. It did conduct a cruel war against Hamas in retaliation for the massacre of Oct. 7, 2023. Hamas could have prevented such a disaster by climbing out of its hiding places in tunnels under civilian structures, but it determined that sacrificing fellow Palestinians would undermine Israel's legitimacy. It was quite right in its brutal calculations.

ROBERT MELSON, *BREWSTER, MASS.*
The writer is the author of "Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust."

Omer Bartov is undoubtedly an accomplished scholar. But scholarship should not be a substitute for clear and convincing proof. Genocide is not simply the killing of large numbers of civilians, however tragic. It is the deliberate intent to destroy a people. That distinction matters. If every brutal war with horrific civilian casualties is labeled genocide before the facts are fully established, the term loses the very meaning that Raphael Lemkin intended when he coined it.

Dr. Bartov writes as though Israel's guilt has already been decided. It has not. South Africa's case against Israel before the International Court of Justice remains pending, and no final judgment has been rendered. Curiously absent from his analysis is Hamas's own history. Its original 1988 charter openly called for Israel's destruction. That declared genocidal intent is not peripheral to understanding the massacre of Oct. 7.

Israel's conduct deserves scrutiny, as does Hamas's. Civilian suffering is heartbreaking regardless of nationality. But replacing legal standards with political conclusions is not justice.

The demanding legal standard defining genocide has long been recognized by courts and genocide scholars alike. It should remain the standard here as well.

(RABBI) REUVEN H. TAFF, *SACRAMENTO*

'The Odyssey' and the hero we deserve

MCCLAY, FROM PAGE 9

larly compelling figure.

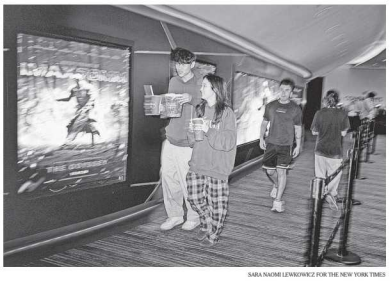
In stories, we seem to be drawn to these halfway heroes: people who sort of know what to do but have a lot of trouble doing it and whose eventual moment of personal resolution somehow fixes everything in the end. In its least artful forms, this turns art into an ersatz therapy session in which you forgive yourself for your failures — and then you save the world.

Mr. Nolan is more artful than that. His heroes are often exceptional men who cause problems, then agonize over how to make amends. The fact that they are men is no accident. Their failures at both masculinity and intimacy are essential to understanding them. They aren't good men, in the sense of upstanding members of the community who work toward building something better. And they aren't bad men, which is to say violent parasites. Instead, they're halfway heroes, charismatic but hollow people who deem love as something best shown by their absence because their presence proves to be too dangerous.

The problem that shapes "The Odyssey" is what has happened in the neglected homes while the men have been away. The suitors who pester Penelope to marry one of them are lesser men than Odysseus, and in the absence of men like Odysseus, no one has taught them how to behave. The generation they represent has gone astray, and there's no fixing it.

We seem to be drawn to these halfway heroes: people who sort of know what to do but have a lot of trouble doing it.

It isn't giving too much away about the movie to say that, much like Mr. Nolan's interpretation of Batman, and even his Oppenheimer, his Odysseus decides to become a sin eater, someone who atones for the misdeeds of others — seeking to rectify not only the disorder that has overcome his home but make amends for the entire Trojan War. His solution to the disastrous generation that lies between his own and his son's is the same as in the poem: Odysseus kills the suitors. They are dangerously weak men, not strong enough to rule or to exhibit self-control but strong enough to terrorize the elderly, the blind, women and children. In the film, Odysseus tries to keep his son's hands clean of blood, but he fails, so the project of creating a genuinely innocent new generation is over before it's started. But having taken all this violence onto himself, Odysseus can attempt to purify his home simply by retreating and leaving it again.



SARA NAOMI LEWKOWICZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In real life, outside the movies, we are certainly presented with many examples of dangerously weak men, much like the suitors: men whose conception of being a man begins and ends with a sense of being able to humiliate others, men who live off the work of others while contributing nothing, men who are manipulative cowards who love to tell tales of their own virtue. When we try to imagine alternatives to these men, we come up with the halfway hero — someone who can't prevent a crisis but will try mightily to fix the mess he made. As one of Mr. Nolan's characters in a different film said, "You either die a hero or live long enough to see yourself become the villain" — an epigram that applies equally to Batman, Oppenheimer and Odysseus.

It's not Mr. Nolan's job as an artist to give us a solution to these dilemmas, and in some ways, I'm glad that in "The Odyssey" he doesn't really try. Still, I watched the ending of his "Odyssey" with a kind of resignation. Maybe, to riff on another well-known line from one of Mr. Nolan's movies — "not the hero we deserved, but the hero we needed" — halfway heroes seem to be the heroes we want, because certainly they're the ones we think we need right now. But we could deserve another kind of hero entirely.

B.D. MCCLAY *is a critic and essayist.*

A blunt warning for Israel

STEPHENS, FROM PAGE 9

Vilnai is no peacenik: He served in a previous Netanyahu government as the minister of home front defense and was one of the commandos who, 50 years ago this month, liberated Jewish hostages in the Entebbe raid. But like many other patriotic Israelis, he's aghast at a government that prioritizes the prime minister's political needs and his cabinet's ideological obsessions over the rule of law.

There is an immediate danger in that the spiraling West Bank violence could easily produce a third intifada that an exhausted Israel can ill afford militarily or diplomatically, to say nothing of the human cost in both Israeli and Palestinian lives. There's a still greater long-term risk that the Netanyahu government's excuse making for Jewish lawlessness and terrorism leads to what the scholar and diplomat Michael Oren, in a prescient Commentary essay from 2009, called "the hemorrhaging of sovereignty."

Any nation in which broad segments of the citizenry are either untouched or untouchable by the law — in Israel's case, not just radical settlers and ultra-Orthodox draft shirkers but also Arab citizens badly underserved by law enforcement — is on the road to its own kind of Lebanonization. That's where every group is a law unto itself and the state's powers, including its monopoly on the use of force, wither.

I've written before that the purpose of Zionism — for which I'm a lifelong advocate — is Jewish self-rule: "Neither rule by others nor rule over others." It's why I still believe in a Palestinian state, even if the conditions for it are probably far off. It's why I more fervently believe in a Jewish state, governed by law and recognizing limits. Under this Israeli government, that's slipping away.

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STYLE

Clothes remake the man

FROM THE MAGAZINE

In a $160 baseball hat and a $770 jacket, I felt seen like never before

BY SAM ANDERSON

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH WHITAKER

They are inconspicuous luxury clothes. I felt sneakily fancy, like a spy with a dangerous secret.

I am not a fashionable man. I spend my life walking around in an exoskeleton made of baseball hats and old flannels. Occasionally, deep inside my dumpy cocoon, I hear muffled rumors about other ways to live — that there is, for instance, a whole elaborate universe revolving around what aficionados call "menswear," different from the broad clothing category of "men's wear": guys who spend their lives, and paychecks, obsessing like Talmudic scholars over exotic fabrics, buttons, shirts, hats.

For me, learning about this raised a few obvious questions: For instance, "Why?" and "What on Earth?" and also "Huh?" What could possibly explain this growing contingent of men who spend hours online discussing artisanal, small-batch, outrageously expensive clothing? Can anyone participate? If I were to slip into a pair of $600 shorts, would it instantly change my life? How much men would a menswear wear if a menswear could wear men?

I called Jonah Weiner, a fellow writer for The New York Times magazine and a co-founder of the popular style newsletter "Blackbird Spyplane." Jonah talks about fashion like Chef Boyardee talks about mamma mia cans of noodles. He told me about all kinds of wizardry: a Japanese brand that makes natural fibers seem like synthetic fibers; another Japanese brand that recreates arcane military footwear in lavish detail.

When I asked Jonah what he was wearing right now, his answer did not disappoint: "A platonic ideal of heavyweight cotton black drawstring sweatpants," he said, along with a sweater knit out of cotton and mohair. Although he acknowledged that this might seem over the top for a regular Tuesday morning — the word "mohair," in particular, tends to get eyes rolling — Jonah said something that I would later see frequently in menswear discussions. Truly special clothing is not just about luxury for the sake of luxury; it is, like all great art, a way to get us to pay attention. In our disembodied world of avatars and glass screens and disposable, mass-produced clothing, a beautiful garment can allow us to remember our bodies, to think about how we sit in the world, to take real pleasure in dailiness. Jonah urged me to go see some menswear for myself — to feel the fabrics, try things on, see what happens.

So I went down to C'H'C'M', a Manhattan shop that is legendary on the menswear forums. I actually walked past it twice before I noticed the entrance — a nondescript door down a narrow set of stairs. Inside, it was small and plain. Stark white floor. Techno music. It felt like an art gallery; everything was obviously expensive and rare and important, even if I couldn't say exactly why. I walked around pinching fabrics, scrutinizing colors, gawking at price tags. Some pieces were so outlandish I couldn't imagine putting them onto a human body as boring as mine.

After a few minutes, however, something changed. Menswear and I started to creep toward each other. Riffling through a rack, I saw a flannel — my native sartorial language — but the material was unlike any of my flannels at home: It was thick and generous and meaty, like an Italian grandmother's handmade ravioli. I could absolutely wear that, I thought. Then I saw a light billowy windbreaker covered with bright flowers — something I would never put on. But what if I should? What if I am actually a different human being than I ever suspected?

For the next 90 minutes or so, I zoomed around the narrow store, back and forth, trying things on, comparing incrementally different shirts and hats. One coat made me feel like a Russian novelist. Another made me feel like a secretly fascinating cabby. I could feel myself becoming obsessive, frenzied. I was starting to covet things. What if one of these garments held the key to my soul but I hesitated, and then some other guy came along and snatched it off the rack?

Eventually I zeroed in on an Australian brand called MAN-TLE. (I have no idea what the hyphen in the middle is up to; menswear brands love to sprinkle punctuation marks around willynilly.) Their clothes were practical and no-nonsense, with subtle touches of strangeness: funky pockets, strips of seatbelt fabric. Almost against my will, I tried on a baseball hat. I didn't need it — I own way too many hats already — but there was something about this one. It was plain blue, no logo, and it fit my head like an avocado fits its pit. It cost $160. Then I tried on a "Boat Shirt" — a light jacket apparently made of cotton (?) infused (??) with paraffin wax (???). It had pocket openings shaped like giant Tic Tacs. It cost $770. Surprising even myself, I bought them both.

Wearing these items out into the real world (grocery store, post office, train station, dentist) felt strange. They are inconspicuous luxury clothes, with no famous logo or flashy colors — so I felt sneakily fancy, like a spy with a dangerous secret.

But then people started making comments.

"That hat makes you look rich," said my wife.

"Nice jacket," said a hotel clerk.

I wasn't sure I liked this. I felt exposed — like a hermit crab who'd exchanged his dirty old shell for a big, glittering, fancy conch, and suddenly all the lobsters were staring at me. I realized, viscerally, that I prefer it when no one is looking at my clothes, even (or especially) to give me compliments.

What did I buy at the menswear shop? It wasn't just fabric. It wasn't just beautifully made clothes. It was the curse/blessing of heightened self-awareness. Wearing these clothes made me feel visible to others (and to myself) in a whole new way. That might feel exquisite to a certain type of guy — someone who isn't already waterlogged with self-consciousness to the point of sinking, or who experiences that feeling in a different way, as a kind of lifting.

But that's not me. Although the clothes fit my body perfectly, if I want to truly become a menswear guy, I'll need some tailoring for my mind.

What counts as 'semiformal'?

Vanessa Friedman, The New York Times's fashion director, answers readers' fashion-related questions. You can send her a question at openthread@nytimes.com or via X: @vfriedman. Questions are edited and condensed.

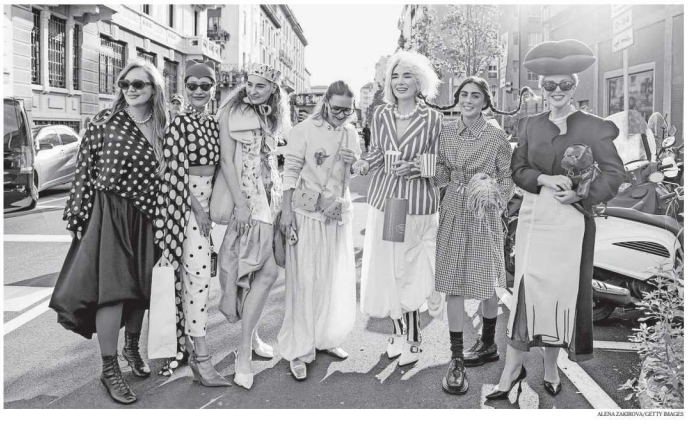
What on earth does semiformal mean today? We've been invited to an event with this dress code, and while we don't want to embarrass ourselves, we do not want to invest in expensive new clothes either. — Tanya, Phoenix

"Semiformal" is one of those terrible default dress codes, like "festive" and "dress to impress" and "dressy casual" (the "jumbo shrimp" of fashion). It sounds good in theory but in practical terms causes more angst than anyone might have imagined. It's the middle ground of dress codes, the DMZ of fashion. It may seem safe — no commitment required! — but it also leaves you stranded in the sartorial netherworld of neither here nor there. Which means you can easily get it wrong.

Dana Asher Levine, a stylist who works with Shonda Rhimes, calls it "the most misunderstood dress code."

Asking the hosts for clarity generally doesn't help. They probably picked that dress code exactly because they didn't want to be too dictatorial with their guests and will offer platitudes like "wear what makes you feel celebratory."

For men, that vagueness, while annoying, is somewhat less of an issue: Semiformal is mostly defined as a suit, not a tux, with or without a tie, and accessorized with a certain level of restraint. (Don't get out the wild prints or the character vests.) But for women, the blurriness is a real quandary.



ALENA ZAKHOVA/GETTY IMAGES

"Semiformal" can mean all sorts of different things to different people.

That's why there are so many online guides to what "semiformal" means, including pages of TikTok videos with the #semiformal hashtag, many of them including the word "help." The Emily Post Institute likewise has attempted a clarification: "A semiformal dress code is best described as being more formal than what you would wear to an office, but slightly less formal than what you would wear to a formal event."

This, however, doesn't mean much, because office dress codes now range from ultracasual to traditional, and people wear jeans to the Met Gala. Even the most basic old guideline — no long gowns — is no longer relevant, given how many ankle-length day dresses and skirts now exist.

So what to do?

Levine, the stylist, thinks of semiformal as "less dressy than black tie and not as glitzy as cocktail attire."

When I asked Derek Blasberg, the author of "Fast + Louche," a collection of images from his stint as a chronicler of nightlife for Interview magazine starting in the late aughts, for his translation, he first shared your pain. "Getting dressed for a party is stressful enough," he said. "Guests don't want mystery. They want direction."

Then he offered, "What your host is probably trying to say is, 'Please make an effort.'"

That doesn't mean rushing out to buy a new dress or suit, but it does mean taking a considered look at what is in your closet.

For Levine, that means paying attention to materials: simple shapes or a nice skirt and jacket are fine, as long as they are in dressier fabrics like velvet, taffeta and heavy crepe. "If you have a gown that you haven't worn in a while," she said, consider taking it to a tailor and having it hemmed. Midi, tea length or to the knee — take your pick. The result will be more versatile and, she said, qualify as "semiformal."

For Blasberg, the answer is thinking about a favorite piece and then "turning it up a notch," he said. (He's partial to a pocket square with a suit.) Pay special attention to shoes. Avoid loafers or daytime flats.

"Dress shoes are always the right choice for men — no white soles or giant logos," he said. "And for women, wear the jewels." A simple black dress with a great necklace, a stack of bangles or even a scarf and a pair of heels can do the trick.

If in doubt, Blasberg advised, it's better to be slightly overdressed than underdressed. "Looking like you cared is never the wrong answer," he said.

VANESSA FRIEDMAN

Sports

Strawberry savors a 1986 legacy and a changed life

BY TIM BRITTON
THE ATHLETIC

When Darryl Strawberry was being pushed into surgery after his heart attack in 2024, among the thoughts racing through his head was this one: I still want the chance to be there.

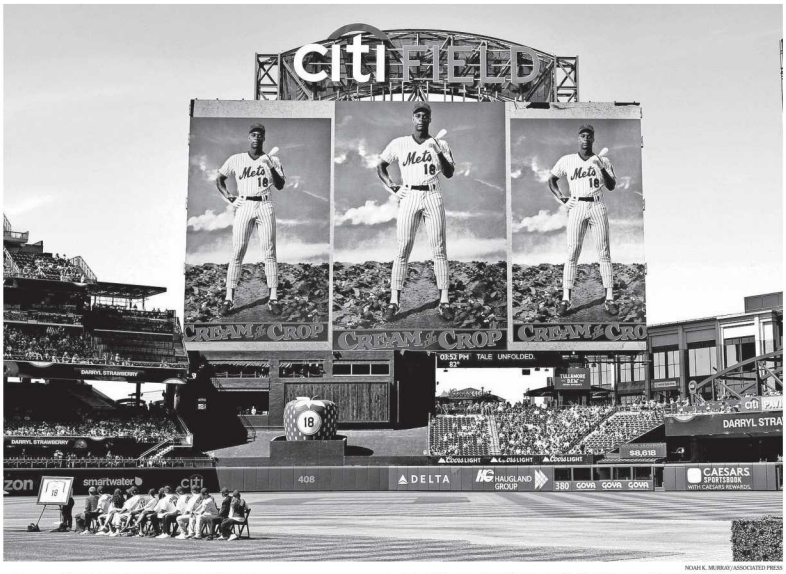
Strawberry knew his number retirement ceremony was just a few months away. It meant the world to him to be there for that day, to see No. 18 put on the Citi Field facade and to thank the fans who had supported him for so long — and to apologize for ever leaving the Mets.

Strawberry made it to that day, and he is excited to be part of another big event at Citi Field on Saturday, when the Mets celebrate the 40th anniversary of their 1986 championship.

Strawberry's third book, "Another Life," is set to come out next month, as well, recounting not only his recovery from his heart attack but also his decades-long journey after his playing career to become a minister.

Strawberry had a long and public struggle with substance abuse and had numerous legal issues over the years, including a conviction on tax-evasion charges and several arrests for domestic abuse. He eventually got clean, he has said, after meeting his current wife, Tracy, a quarter-century ago.

Strawberry, 64, recently spoke to The Athletic about the book and what he is most looking forward to at the reunion. The interview has been edited and condensed.



NOAH K. MURRAY/ASSOCIATED PRESS

EDDIE HAUSNER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Darryl Strawberry had his number retired in 2024, above. On Saturday, the New York Mets will honor its 1986 World Series champions. At left, from left, Strawberry, Davey Johnson, Ron Darling, Mel Stottlemeyer and Dwight Gooden in 1990.

What compelled you to write "Another Life"? What message did you want to get across?

I wanted people to know you could have another life, that you could reinvent yourself and you don't have to stay the same. For a long time, I was a baseball player and someone who had trials and tribulations. I'm no longer that person. I shifted my life in a different way and went in a different direction — and not for me.

The Lord saved me and changed me, but it gives me an opportunity to go out there and help those who are looking for purpose. I found the purpose of my life. That's what we're all here for: to find a purpose.

What have your mother and your wife meant to you on this journey?

Just everything. First with my mother, I wish I would have listened to her when I was playing baseball and going through that life. I didn't pay attention to that.

And then Tracy came into my life and she led me back. I sat for seven years to go through discipleship. People think the person I am is an overnight miracle. It wasn't overnight. It was a long journey.

That was a gift and I realized what a great gift women are. They help put the pieces back together. I'm just glad I was able to recognize that they'd be the important parts I needed to get me to where I'm at today.

You mention a lot of mentors, including Mookie Wilson and Gary Carter, as examples of manhood for you. What have you learned about what it takes to be a man and a good example for your kids and now your grandchildren?

It's really cool. It's really different. It's really real. I saw Mookie and Gary like that when they had the uniform on. It's been a real blessing for my kids to see me as someone totally different than people had talked about. People talked about my career. They got a chance to see my number retired, and afterward my youngest daughter said, "Dad, you're a really big thing in New York." I was like, "Nah, I used to be."

It's important that I walk this way and live this way and really don't talk about it to them. The actions of who I am make a difference to my kids and my grandkids.

What did it mean to give a eulogy for Davey Johnson, your former manager, at his funeral last year?

When his wife, Susan, asked me if I would do it, I just thought to myself that this had truly come full circle, to do that for a person who meant so much to all of us.

To be there as a player and to represent him and his family and speak on behalf of what he'd done for all of us, especially me, was very special. Davey helped so many guys. I was able to send him off in a good way, to show how special he was not just as a manager but as a person. I needed that for myself.

How vital was he to what the Mets were able to do in the 1980s?

It was all him. He's the one that got us to believe. He's the one that turned the franchise around, from a mess to the Mets. I don't think people today give him enough credit for what he did for that franchise. When he came in '84, that's when we started to win. He still has the highest winning percentage of any manager there, and people never really talk about how good that stretch was.

And not only that, everywhere he went he continued to win. That shows you what kind of skills he had as a manager. He was a player, and he let players be players.

At the end of the book, you talk about a lot of full-circle moments. Is that what this gathering of the 1986 team is for you?

It's definitely a full-circle moment. That team is something that will always be special — a special group of guys who had the grit and truly knew how to grind it out no matter what the circumstances were. We were always there for each other and had each other's back and played to win. Davey told us that in spring training — that we're going to win it all and we're going to dominate. We went into St. Louis and swept the Cardinals early in the year, and Whitey Herzog said nobody's going to catch us. That was big to hear from him. He saw how talented we were and we were going to be hard to beat.

What are you most looking forward to that day?

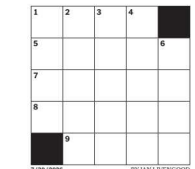
Just the guys. I'm looking forward to the reaction from the fans for certain players, like Lenny Dykstra, who has turned his life around and come back full circle. He was a big key to everything that happened those seasons for us, the way he played. I'm looking forward to seeing the fans embrace him. They've already embraced me and Doc Gooden and Keith Hernandez with our numbers retired.

We miss Gary Carter. I wish his number was retired because he's the reason we were champions. A lot of people didn't give him enough credit for that. They say he only played a short time. It's not about a short time; it's about what a player means to a team. Hopefully one day they put his number up, too.

You start the book with your heart attack and your fear you wouldn't make it to your number retirement ceremony in 2024. What does it mean to you to be here for moments like this with your family?

That was a truly special moment to be there with my family to see with my kids and my friends and to tell the fans I was so sorry for leaving Queens. To be on that field and represent No. 18 was a day I'll never forget. Those are really special moments and things you dream of. Having my number retired is my Hall of Fame.

The Mini Crossword



7/30/2026 BY IAN LIVENGOOD
EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

ACROSS
1 Half of a clothing pair
5 Early 2000s hip-hop subgenre for songs like "Get Low" and "Yeah!"
7 Concur
8 Baltimore N.F.L. player
9 Tree house, of a sort

DOWN
1 Harry Potter's defining mark
2 Lungs or liver
3 Dangerous stretch of a mountain road
4 Body parts touched after the shoulders, in song
6 Clark ___ a.k.a. Superman

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

■	P	L	A	Y
R	O	S	E	■
B	O	O	K	S
P	O	S	E	■
A	F	E	W	■

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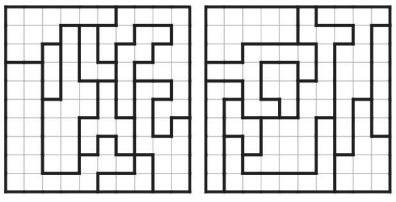
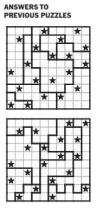


ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES



Put two stars in each row, column and region of the grid. No two stars may touch, not even diagonally.

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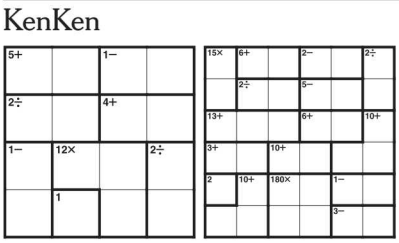
Cryptogram

M'W HLMGU ZK SDNI ICMFD / XDG GIULU'Z KYU ZSCRR MZZDU / M WKY'G FYKH IKH GK NKDYG

PUZZLE BY BEN BASS

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER 1. Client or aliens 2. Renege 3. Assort 4. Lively 5. Gnomish

KenKen



ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES

3	4	2	1
4	2	1	3
1	3	4	2
2	1	3	4

1	2	4	3	6	5
6	4	5	1	2	3
3	6	2	4	5	1
4	5	1	2	3	6
2	3	6	5	1	4
5	1	3	6	4	2

Fill the grid with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 4x4 grid will use the digits 1-4. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

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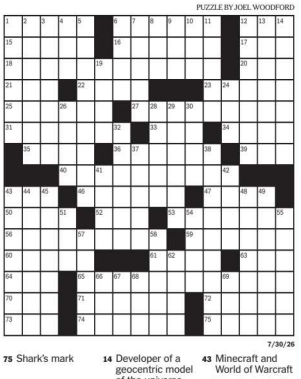
Crossword | Edited by Will Shortz

PUZZLE BY JOEL WOODFORD



7/30/26

ACROSS
1 Change entirely
6 Like former secrets
12 Make like a frog
15 One who doesn't speak while in a cast
16 Balkan state that's been independent since 2008
17 Like the name of former soccer star Mark De Man
18 *Cluster*
20 Density symbol
21 Go for gold?
22 It may be padded or slapped
23 Do you read me?
25 Veteran
27 *Agent*
31 Change logos, maybe
33 "Bravo!"
34 Dour
35 Unnatural, in a way
36 H.S. course covering integrals
39 ___ trading
40 *Steam*
43 Sow, e.g.
46 Black-and-orange bird
47 Bob who painted "happy little trees"
50 Jackie who co-starred in "Rush Hour"
52 Top halves of centaurs
53 They may be lifted ... or downed
56 *Gambit*
59 City with red buses
60 Big or bad follower
61 So-called "Land of a Million Elephants"
63 Fripp & ___ (musical duo)
64 ___ culpa
65 Communication aid that helps make sense of the italicized clues
70 Subj. for immigrants, maybe
71 Training aids for a lab, say
72 Plain
73 ___ pad
74 What headphones often play in
75 Shark's mark

DOWN
1 Church leader
2 Took one's breath away?
3 Remain loyal to
4 Pronounce "aisle" as it's spelled, e.g.
5 It often leans left or right
6 ___-Ball
7 Joel follows it
8 Flame's remains
9 Lumpsucker eggs
10 Biblical second coming?
11 Prima ___
12 University of Cambridge
13 "Hamlet" noblewoman
14 Developer of a geocentric model of the universe
19 Words after cash or zero
24 [Horrors!]
26 Org. leader
28 One who knows all the shortcuts, maybe
29 Puts down
30 Where Dante's path to paradise begins
32 Panama's ___ National Park
37 That's the whole point!
38 Seller of knickknacks
41 Gospel singer Franklin
42 Like a zoomer after 1997
43 Minecraft and World of Warcraft
44 "If we're lucky!"
45 Rhyming name for a certain group of friends
48 It's not the main part of the action
49 High achievers?
51 Notable org. with 32 members
54 Sit (down) heavily
55 Arrogant
57 Lets
58 Really please
62 Plus
66 It might be left hanging
67 Most common letter in this clue
68 Boat propeller
69 Director DuVernay

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

K	A	R	L	■	A	L	F	A	■	R	A	D	A	R
A	S	E	A	■	V	A	I	N	■	I	M	A	G	E
P	L	O	T	P	O	I	N	T	■	P	O	L	O	S
P	A	R	T	Y	C	R	A	S	H	E	R	■	■	■
A	N	G	E	L	A	■	L	Y	O	N	■	M	F	A
■	■	■	S	O	D	A	■	K	E	G	E	L	S	■
T	E	D	■	N	O	S	T	R	A	D	A	M	U	S
A	R	E	A	■	I	R	E	■	P	O	K	E	■	■
K	E	N	J	E	N	N	I	N	G	S	■	S	E	T
I	T	S	A	G	O	■	T	A	P	E	■	■	■	■
S	T	E	■	G	O	R	E	■	R	A	N	D	O	M
■	■	■	V	E	N	I	V	I	D	I	V	I	C	I
B	R	A	I	D	■	L	A	T	E	N	I	G	H	T
R	A	M	B	O	■	E	D	E	N	■	E	I	R	E
A	S	P	E	N	■	D	E	M	S	■	S	N	E	S

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Culture

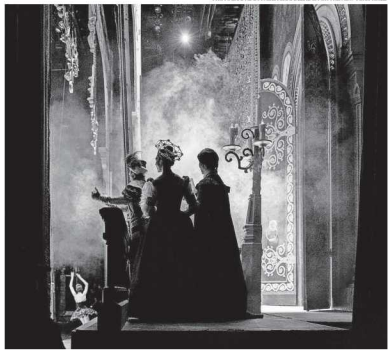
So close you feel the sweat fly

Our reporter experiences the thrills and nerves of being a 'Swan Lake' extra

BY MARGARET FUHRER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAOLA CHAPDELAINE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Above, Margaret Fuhrer before her performance as a supernumerary in "Swan Lake" at the Metropolitan Opera House; and right, at center, during Act III. Supers' hours are often long and late and they receive negligible pay, but they do get front-row seats to the stage action.



Above left, swift costume adjustments; right, the dresser Khristina Acosta helping Janna Jensen, a former dancer who is a veteran supernumerary, with her costume.

One Tuesday evening in July, I made my American Ballet Theater debut in "Swan Lake" at the Metropolitan Opera House.

That sentence would have thrilled me back when I was a starry-eyed ballet student. But could teenage me have guessed it would describe an arthritic 42-year-old, wearing not pointe shoes but character heels?

On that unreal night, I appeared as a supernumerary, the term for a ballet extra. Being onstage, although well out of the spotlight, brought once-familiar sensations flooding back: the particular dry-mouth feel that comes from nerves and heavy lipstick, the sweat-and-velvet musk of the costumes. But nothing can quite prepare you for your first look into the Met audience — faceless and staggeringly vast.

Some of Ballet Theater's large story ballets bring in dozens of supers, as they're called, to round out the stage picture. It is not typically a glamorous job. Supers' hours are often long and late; their pay is negligible. As background characters in warhorse ballets like "The Sleeping Beauty" (120 supers) and "Romeo and Juliet" (59 supers), they get little glory. They often portray assorted villagers or townspeople, even corpses.

But they also get front-row seats to the stage action. At the royal ball in Act III of "Swan Lake" — where the hero, Prince Siegfried, is seduced by the deceptive Black Swan, Odile — six supernumeraries play noble guests. I stood onstage for nearly the whole act, fluttering a feathered fan and reacting subtly to the storytelling. During the famous Black Swan pas de deux, I was mere feet from the stars Chloe Misseldine and Daniel Camargo — close enough to feel the sweat that whipped from Camargo's brow as he pirouetted. (Gross, but thrilling!)

My stage partner for the evening was Ulrich Suss, who goes by Iggy and has performed super roles with Ballet Theater for 36 years. (He asked me to give his age as "50s.") As a super, "you may not be doing anything important," he said. "But to watch those glorious dancers up close, in combination with the beautiful music — it's magic. I will never tire of it."

Supers are more than living scenery. Ballet can seem like a place where everybody is approximately the same (young) age and the same (lithe) shape. Supers, who may or may not have dance backgrounds, are often much older or younger than company members. They make the stage world look more like the real world, adding richness as well as fullness.

Nancy Raffa, a former Ballet Theater dancer and now a director of repertoire at the company, has supervised supers for two decades. "The supers are a vital part of making the production feel active and luxurious, yes," she said in a video interview. "But they also make it more meaningful, more real."

The Metropolitan Opera uses hundreds of background actors over the course of its nearly 40-week season, paying $30 an hour for rehearsals and a minimum of $92 for each performance. The performers might include television or theater actors totally unfamiliar with opera but in need of extra cash.

By contrast, Ballet Theater's summer Met season is just five weeks long. And supers are technically volunteers. The company provides an honorarium, approximately $25 a call, whether a rehearsal or a performance. Those meager enticements mean the super pool is full of ballet students, former dancers and aficionados — people who *really* love ballet.

The age spectrum comprises a fascinating cast of characters. On one end are the children, most of whom are serious ballet students, aspiring to someday dance the choreography being performed center stage.

Sometimes, young supers' professional dreams come true. Jose Sebastian, now 38 and a Ballet Theater soloist, was a super in several productions when he was a child.

"I was in total awe of all the stars," he said. "To be onstage with them really fueled this growing love I had for ballet." More than 20 years ago, he supered as one of the trumpeters in "Swan Lake," playing a fanfare for the evil sorcerer Von Rothbart. Today, he dances Von Rothbart.

On the other end of the spectrum are veteran supers like Suss, who have been doing these roles for decades. Most seasons, Ballet Theater holds open auditions for the adult parts; repertory directors and stage managers evaluate hopefuls based on their musicality — and, crucially, whether they'll fit the existing costumes. "We just aren't able to tailor costumes for 50 supers on top of 80 dancers," Danielle Ventimiglia, Ballet Theater's production stage manager, said.

But the loyalists who return season after season — who have proved their reliability, and whose measurements are on file — sometimes get invitations from the production team. Suss, a trained dancer, is part of that select group. He also performs at clubs under the stage name Iggy Berlin, occasionally running home after a show at the Met to change for a late-night performance.

With his distinctive theatrical flair, Suss is often entrusted with more involved super roles — like the beggar in Kenneth MacMillan's "Romeo and Juliet" who, memorably, turns out to be a con artist.

Experienced supers, he said, often know more about a production's history than company members do. And from their posts on the sidelines, they watch generations of dancers come and go. "I saw Julie Kent rise in the company," Suss said of the former Ballet Theater principal, "and then all of a sudden there I was, giving flowers to her at her farewell."

Certain supers have become indelibly associated with particular roles. When I arrived at the dressing room to begin my "Swan Lake" super journey — as a reporter, I'd been spared the audition process — I met three of them.

Janna Jensen and Theresa Khawly were to be fellow guests at the royal ball. Both former dancers, they originated these super parts in the production when it premiered in 2000, and have performed them ever since.

"The costumes were made for us," said Jensen, whose dancing was reviewed approvingly in this paper in 1980. "That is unheard-of for a super. Such a luxury!"

Elaine Brownstein, the third of the group, was not performing that evening: I was taking her spot. (Despite her assurances that it was just fine, I couldn't help but feel guilty.) She also trained in dance, and is both a longtime super and a longtime patron of Ballet Theater — as is Khawly, a former trustee.

Preparing for the show alongside these women felt like being initiated into a beautiful, strange little club. Brownstein handed me a giant purple cocktail ring, the sister to rings that Jensen and Khawly were already wearing. Khawly had given the baubles to the cast as gifts on the production's opening night. Over the course of 26 years, they had become talismans, worn for every performance. (Outside jewelry is typically a no-no for supers, but in this case the wardrobe department turned a blind eye.)

As I tried on my costume, Brownstein hovered and adjusted and appraised. The sumptuous burgundy-and-gold gown was an old friend of hers, after all. She warned me about a torn ruffle on the underskirt that had plagued her the night before.

We trekked down the Met's labyrinthine hallways to the hair and makeup room, where the company's professionals wigged and crowned and rouged me with astonishing alacrity. And then, a scant hour after I'd arrived, it was time to head to the stage.

Most new supers have a studio rehearsal and a technical rehearsal onstage to master their roles. Because my part was relatively straightforward, and because I would be on the trustworthy Suss's arm for its duration, my only practice came during the last five minutes of the intermission before Act III.

Suss walked me through our route. As the curtain rose, we'd promenade around the stage along with the rest of the royal assembly. After a brief exit, we'd go up a short flight of steps concealed by the wings and emerge on a small platform from which we'd watch the rest of the proceedings. Brownstein showed me the best way to gather my skirts as I walked up the stairs. "You don't want to trip onto the stage," she said. (New fear unlocked.)

I tried to remember the advice Raffa, the director of repertoire, had given about my character during our interview a few days earlier. "You're an aristocrat," she had told me. "You're sophisticated." She had said the costume would help, and she was right: Yards of brocade naturally slow your movement to a courtly pace.

Things began to happen fast. A stage manager called places. Iggy steered me to our opening position, facing the rear of the stage. The lights went out. I couldn't see the curtains parting, but I could feel the change in the air pressure as they did.

And then we were moving, the stage aswirl with ball-goers' skirts. As we made our first exit, I realized I'd been holding my breath. Up the stairs we went — I gave a silent prayer of thanks when I got to the top — and we arrived at our perch.

Unbeknown to the audience, a surprising amount of talking happens onstage at the ballet. As we watched the act unfold, Suss gave me occasional sotto voce guidance about how to react to the goings-on. (When Von Rothbart impertinently kissed the Queen's hand: "Can he *do* that? Be shocked, very shocked!") The lead dancers from the Polish mazurka divertissement, stationed next to us, traded through-the-teeth jokes about how, of all the princesses at the ball, their Polish princess was the *best* princess.

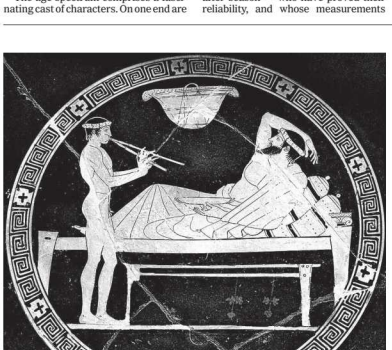
"The supers are a vital part of making the production feel active and luxurious, yes. But they also make it more meaningful."

Soon came the big-ticket moment: the Black Swan pas de deux. The intensity of Misseldine and Camargo, legible from the highest balcony, was overwhelming at such close range. You almost couldn't look at them directly. I had to remind myself that royal courtiers don't applaud.

The ending came as suddenly as the beginning had. Odile and Von Rothbart's evil trick was revealed with a flourish of pyrotechnics, and Suss and I, looking (I hope) suitably dismayed, whirled offstage in the smoke.

Though the show wasn't over — somewhere, Misseldine was quick changing into her Odette costume for Act IV — it was time for me to head back to the dressing room with the other supers. We were abuzz with adrenaline, chattering about the highlights of the pas de deux.

As I returned the purple ring, I felt the spell of the evening break. But for the rest of the supers, the enchantment would continue: They would be back the next night, and the night after that, making the stage a little bit more magical.



VCG WILSON/CORBIS, VIA GETTY IMAGES

A depiction of an aulos being played in ancient Greek art. Ludwig Göransson makes use of the instrument in his soundtrack for "The Odyssey," a new film by Christopher Nolan.

Evoking the allure of the siren song

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

The most haunting music in 'The Odyssey' uses an ancient reed instrument

BY JOSHUA BARONE

Since seeing Christopher Nolan's new adaptation of "The Odyssey" last week, I haven't been able to get one moment out of my head.

It's a famous scene: Odysseus, warned of the sirens and their fatally alluring song, has his men stuff their ears with wax for protection. But he wants to hear the music, so he has the crew tie him to the ship's mast. The sound, he soon finds out, is a beautiful torment.

Nolan offers only a distant glimpse of the sirens, and he doesn't give away a note of their music. Instead, as the men row and their leader screams at the mast, you hear Ludwig Göransson's soundtrack: a reedy tune of longing and sorrow that makes you share, briefly but profoundly, Odysseus' feelings as he hears the sirens.

On TikTok, fans have posted pirated clips of the scene and Göransson's music, with text like "This sound won't leave my head," "This was the most beautiful thing ever" and "I cannot stop thinking about the siren sequence." People have already covered it on their guitars and their pianos, their English horns and their saxophones.

Homer doesn't say much about the actual sound of the sirens, aside from descriptions of their song as "honeyed" and "melodious," in Emily Wilson's translation. Odysseus says he "longed to listen to more," but he doesn't give in, remaining tied to the mast until the ship passes through.

Nolan makes the scene more dramatically expansive, a reflection of Odysseus' homesickness, his guilt over the sacking of Troy and his long recovery from the war. Asked what the siren song was, he answers:

All the things you want it to be. Then, all the things you wish you had never wished for. It was the delicious itch you go to scratch but find it's under the skin, you can't reach it. So the delicious itch becomes unbearable. Told you what you most want is what you most can't have. And what you most can't have is what you already had, and lost.

For most of the movie, Göransson's music is metallic. He has said in interviews that he and Nolan didn't want to use a traditional orchestra, so he assembled a chorus of gongs that are heard both acoustically and abstracted through synthesizers, making an earthy sound otherworldly. He occasionally brings in other textures, too, like the plucking of a lyre for a motif associated with Odysseus' bow and, in the siren scene, an ancient reed instrument called an aulos.

The aulos appears throughout Greek art, in military and domestic scenes alike. It looks like two recorders that come together at a player's mouth, blown at the same time. Its construction allowed Göransson to use one pipe for a droning pedal tone, and the other for melody. That melody is just four notes: two that reach up, as if yearning, and two that fall, like a collapse. It's so simple and so sad.

Together, the melody and the pedal tone form a series of intervals, each with their own meanings in Western classical music. The first is known as a minor sixth interval, which sets a mournful tone, followed by a second interval, whose sound is brightly and harshly dissonant. Then, he brings the melodic line up, pining again, but in what is called a fifth interval, which is consonant but not necessarily harmonious, only to fall to a note in unison with the pedal tone.

The phrase repeats, its harmonic tension becoming the itch under your skin that Odysseus describes. Göransson's music for this scene never truly resolves. It's unsatisfying yet endlessly tantalizing, its own kind of siren song.

The mansion that was always listening

LONDON

A new London museum reveals a bold strategy for manipulating Nazi generals

BY ROSLYN SULCAS

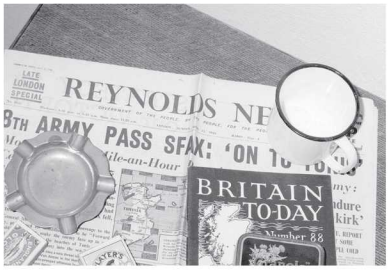
The German generals were chatting freely, exchanging tidbits about the V-2 rocket, the world's first long-range ballistic missile that the Nazis were developing. It was May 1943, and the soldiers, prisoners of war captured in North Africa, were living at Trent Park, a grand country house in a North London suburb.

Trent Park had been the home of Philip Sassoon, a wealthy politician and celebrated host, and the prisoners lived a life of ease in the mansion set amid 400 acres (162 hectares) of parkland. They wore their uniforms, retained the valets who had been captured with them, walked in the woods, read in the library,

Above, a portrait of Sassoon, a celebrated host who transformed Trent Park into a glamorous getaway in the 1920s. Below, a tour guide behind a door hidden in the bookcase in the drawing rooms.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SOPHIE STAFFORD FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Trent Park, a country home in North London that belonged to Philip Sassoon, the scion of a wealthy Iraqi Jewish merchant family, became part of an audacious strategy for extracting information from the German officers held there during World War II. Below, exhibits in a new museum that occupies the house's ground floor and the basement.



played billiards and card games, and foraged for mushrooms.

What they didn't know was that they were part of an audacious, improbable and brilliantly successful strategy for extracting information that would play a major role in the Allies' World War II victory.

Lulled into complacency by the apparent respect for their status, these top military commanders had no idea they were effectively on a stage set, a kind of "Truman Show" in which their encounters were engineered and their conversations monitored through a complex network of microphones hidden in light fittings, chimneys, plant pots, trees and statues.

The microphones were wired to a secret underground lair below the mansion's grand reception rooms, where "listeners" — mostly German Jewish refugees — recorded and transcribed the conversations for British military intelligence. (The V-2 exchange led to the Allied bombing of Peenemünde, Germany, where the Nazis were building the rockets.)

The Trent Park operation remained classified until 1996, and until now this piece of wartime history has been little known to a wider public. But last week, Trent Park House of Secrets opened as a museum that shows both the upstairs world of gracious living and the downstairs world of hushed, clandestine work.

"Everyone knows about Bletchley Park," said Giuseppe Albano, the museum's director, referring to Britain's renowned World War II code-breaking headquarters. "But Trent House was part of the same network of intelligence houses, and as important."

A house has stood in Trent Park, once part of the estate of King George III, since the late 18th century, but it was Sassoon, the scion of a wealthy Iraqi Jewish merchant family, who transformed it into a glamorous getaway in the 1920s. He changed the facade, extended the house, and added a swimming pool, tennis courts, a polo field, a golf course and an air strip. There he entertained politicians, actors, writers and royalty, including Winston Churchill, Charlie Chaplin, Noël Coward, George Bernard Shaw and T.E. Lawrence, with what one guest described as hospitality "on an Oriental scale."

"The whole house is a charade, a Victorian house rebuilt to look like a Georgian gentleman's mansion," said Damian Collins, the author of a biography of Sassoon. "The house was always a show and a fantasy, and Sassoon was like a stage director, moving characters around."

After Sassoon died in June 1939, at 50, the house became another kind of stage set with a different cast of characters.

Requisitioned by Britain's war office and overseen by Lt. Col. Thomas Kendrick, the house was equipped with false panels and ceilings, secret microphones and recording equipment, all routed to the underground rooms where the listeners worked in pairs for 10- or 12-hour shifts through the day and night.

About 40 listeners garnered intelligence from 84 generals and 22 colonels, most captured in North Africa, and some later in France.

It proved hugely significant, providing the Allies with information about the Nazi war machine, new warfare techniques, secret weapons programs and battle plans that could never have been gleaned through conventional interrogation.

There was also extensive evidence about the Holocaust, but in order to keep its strategy secret, British Intelligence wouldn't allow the recordings to be used in war crimes trials after the war.

Recognition of Trent Park's pivotal role in the conflict came late. In the 1950s, the house became a teacher training college, later part of Middlesex University. In 2013, the neglected estate was sold to a Malaysian higher education institution, which declared bankruptcy soon after.

Jason Charalambous, a lawyer who had just been elected as a district councilor in the area in 2014, went on a tour of the unkempt grounds and saw the fenced-off house. "I read a concise history, and I decided something had to be done," he said in an interview in the museum's cafe. "How on earth had I not known about this?"

Charalambous began a "Save Trent Park" campaign, assembling a team that included Helen Fry, the author of "The Walls Have Ears," and Fritz Lustig, one of the last surviving listeners.

He also approached David Cholmondeley, the Marquess of Cholmondeley and Philip Sassoon's great-nephew, who arrived at their first public meeting with an album of photographs and newspaper cuttings. (Cholmondeley said he remembered Queen Elizabeth II telling him that she had fed the penguins on the Trent Park lake as a child.)

The microphones were wired to a secret underground lair where "listeners" recorded and transcribed the conversations.

In 2015, the estate was sold to a property developer, but after extensive lobbying, the group agreed that a museum could occupy the house's basement and ground floor. Ten years after planning officially began, the new museum offers a meticulous reconstruction of the glamorous reception rooms of the Sassoon era and the gritty subterranean reality of the listeners.

Upstairs, the grand salons used by the generals sport Sassoon's scrolled initials, plush sofas and shelves of leather-bound books. "We were helped by great photos from a 1931 'Country Life' article, and by Lord Cholmondeley who found some of the original furniture," said Tori Reeve, the exhibition designer and curator.

Downstairs, in cramped quarters, a mannequin sits before the listening equipment and recording apparatus wearing headphones. Stores of period tinned staples (coffee, tea, salt) line leather shelves. The "draft room," where the manuscripts were typed, translated and copied, and a mess room, have been faithfully recreated.

"It's important, when antisemitism and anti-refugee sentiment is on the rise, to realize the sacrifices the listeners made," Charalambous said. "Those Jewish German refugees were doing something so valuable under the shadow of what was happening in their homeland, and couldn't tell anyone about it."

He laughed. "It's ludicrous how bonkers the operation was. And they pulled it off."

Behind a sugary-sweet portrait, a dark story

BOOK REVIEW

The Renoir Girls: A Hidden History of Art, War & Betrayal
By Catherine Ostler. *Atria. 410 pp. $35.*

BY LESLIE CAMHI

In the spring of 1881, a black-clad man, a bit down at the heels and carrying a large bag, knocked on the door of a townhouse on Paris's elegant Avenue Montaigne.

Following his success at the Salon of 1879, Pierre-Auguste Renoir had been deluged with portrait commissions, though he grumbled at the genre's low pay and limitations. Now he'd arrived at the home of the Cahen d'Anvers family, tasked with portraying its two youngest daughters.

For their portrait, 4-year-old Alice and 6-year-old Elisabeth stood doll-like, holding hands on a red smyrna carpet, wearing white lace dresses tied with wide satin sashes, the hues reflected in the colors of their hair bows, slips and ankle socks. "Pink and Blue, the Misses Cahen d'Anvers" ranks today among the most popular paintings in the São Paulo Museum of Art, in Brazil — a "duet of sugared-almond-colored sweetness," in Catherine Ostler's description.

Yet in "The Renoir Girls," Ostler employs her research skills like an X-ray technician, peeking beneath the painting's shimmering surface to reveal secrets and betrayals at the heart of both a single Jewish family and French society. The Belle Époque, after all, received its name only in retrospect, when the horrors of war had made the decades preceding it appear more beautiful in memory.

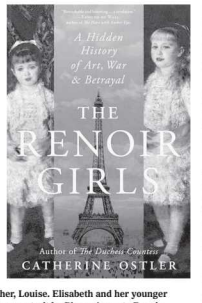
The portrait's chilly reception in the household provides an early clue. For years, it hung, overlooked, in the servants' quarters. Renoir had been a daring choice for the girls' parents — Louis, a second-generation banker, and Louise, a celebrated beauty and *salonnière*. Louise's special friend, Charles Ephrussi, a bachelor of sophisticated tastes, had recommended him. Had Louis finally tired of his wife's lover's suggestions?

Renoir, too, was miffed. He was "the only working-class Impressionist," Ostler notes, and his resentment of his patrons could slide, at times, into something darker. He complained that Louis's payment for the picture was "pretty stingy" and slow in coming. "I really give up with the Jews," he wrote to a friend.

His grievances were reflective of a Gilded Age in which class tensions gave rise to anarchist bombings, and the Dreyfus Affair — a notorious miscarriage of justice that dragged on for 12 years, in which a Jewish army officer was framed for treason — tore at the fabric of society.

The Cahen d'Anvers and their circle had long mingled with *ancien régime* aristocrats at charity balls, the opera and the races at Deauville. Now their world was split: on one side, right-wing French Catholics with faith in the military; on the other, defenders of the French republic's legacy of secular humanism. Louis and Louise's Jewish friends mostly belonged to the Dreyfusard camp — but there were defections.

IMAGE VIA LADY BAYLIS



Left, Elisabeth Cahen d'Anvers with her mother, Louise. Elisabeth and her younger sister, Alice, were immortalized as children in a portrait by Pierre-Auguste Renoir.

Though raised with little religion, their girls were expected to marry within their milieu. Their brothers managed it. But Elisabeth joined the Catholic Church in 1895 — at the height of the Dreyfus Affair, when the pace of conversions quickened — and the next year wed Comte Jean de Forceville (blue-blooded, short on cash), maintaining his royalist, right-wing convictions for decades after their 1901 divorce.

The eldest daughter, Irène, also converted, leaving her eminently suitable husband, Count Moïse de Camondo, with whom she had two children, to marry the head of his stables, a womanizing Italian nobleman. (The marriage, which produced another daughter, didn't last.) Passions aside, was it a relief to shed the Jewish name of Camondo, becoming the Countess Sampieri?

Finally, in 1898, at the Château de Champs-sur-Marne — the former home of Mme. de Pompadour, restored by Louis and Louise — Alice married Col. Charles Townshend, the poor but ambitious scion of an aristocratic English family, in an Anglican service.

Plucky Alice emerges as a heroine in this beguiling, troubling and ultimately heartbreaking book. (As a 64-year-old widow, she rescued her two grandchildren from a France on the verge of occupation, spiriting them by boat to England. Ostler's book is dedicated to Alice's surviving granddaughter.)

Yet Irène, who appears to have gotten by in occupied Paris by keeping a low profile and lying, remains the greater mystery. (A new book in French attempts to fill in the gaps in her murky story.)

During the war, Elisabeth — frail and hiding in a small village — may have assumed that her conversion would save her. But the village's mayor was a right-wing aristocrat whose family and the Cahen d'Anvers went way back. "For four generations, they had spun under the same crystal chandeliers," Ostler writes. "What intergenerational resentment, historic jealousy or hatred would prompt the mayor to betray Elisabeth?"

In 1944, Elisabeth would die either en route to or at Auschwitz. Béatrice (Irène's daughter with Moïse), too, was deported and murdered at Auschwitz, with her husband and two children.

Reading "The Renoir Girls," I sometimes wanted to shake the Cahen d'Anvers and their friends, to wake them from the dizzying rounds of galas, tea dances and weekend hunts. Their wealth had propped up indebted governments. They assembled magnificent collections of 18th-century furniture and Impressionist paintings, built and restored remarkable villas, and donated much of it to France. Their young men had fought and died for France. They adored the style of Marie Antoinette. Couldn't they have figured out this would end badly?

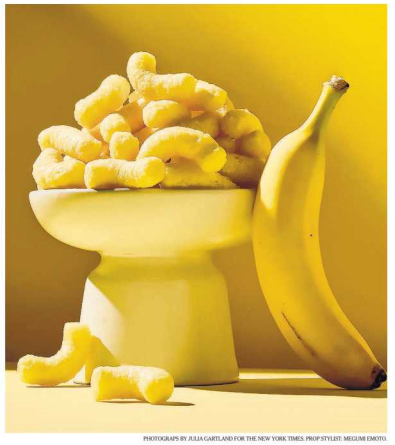
A still more worrisome and timely question arises, amid a global scourge of antisemitism: What is the effect of this age-old hatred on the private lives and choices of individuals today?

I've never been a huge Renoir fan. But a few years ago, I stumbled upon his stunning portrait of the young Irène, and gasped. By then, I knew something of the painting's history and how this vision of tender girlhood, once stolen by the Nazis, had ended up in the collection of a Swiss war profiteer.

The betrayals in this story are endless. Ostler's book is one more effort, dogged and impressive, to set the record straight.

Leslie Camhi writes, often about books and art, for The New Yorker and other publications.

LIVING



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JULIA GARTLAND FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. PROP STYLIST: MEGUMI EMOTO.

This food and beverage trend has gone bananas

The popularity of the fruit can been seen on menus and in grocery stores

BY LUKE FORTNEY

Things were looking grim for Tae Kim. Last year, over the course of a few months, nearly a dozen competing coffee shops opened near his business in the trendy Kerns neighborhood of Portland, Ore. Mr. Kim's Korean cafe, Soro Soro Coffee & Dessert, an outlier when it opened in 2019, was suddenly surrounded.

Sales plummeted.

But there was a bright yellow spot: banana-flavored drinks, which he'd long offered, suddenly began outselling everything else. A newer menu item — banana cream-topped matcha garnished with Banana Kick, a puffed snack from South Korea — buoyed business. It is now his most popular drink.

"Banana is familiar and approachable," Mr. Kim said, "but still unique enough to stand out."

Indeed, the world's most eaten fresh fruit is standing out with unusual and unexpected force, on cafe, bar and restaurant menus and in grocery stores across the United States. In May, the popular protein bar brand Barebells introduced a banana-nut-bread-flavored bar. Last month, Mars began selling banana-nut-flavored M&Ms.

Trending beverages have gone bananas. Banana is in matcha. Banana is in seltzer, soft and hard. Banana is in dairy-free creamer. Banana is in canned water.

And, despite its relatively low protein content, banana is now synonymous with liquid gains at Starbucks. Last fall, the company introduced banana protein cold foam. Not to be outflavored, Dunkin' released its own line of banana syrups and foams in March, calling banana "the flavor of the season" in a press release.

Leonid Yuffa, the owner of 20 locations of Dazbog Coffee in Colorado, would go as far as to call it the next pumpkin spice. When you sip one of his cafe's seasonal banana lattes, "it feels like you're on vacation," he said.

That familiarity makes bananas ripe for experimentation, experts say.

"It's one of the last nonpolarizing foods in a polarizing world," said Rob Smithson, a founder of Banagua, a banana water company. "Every demographic, every age group, every culture all over the world loves bananas."

After stints in bottled water and beverage branding, Mr. Smithson set out to create a coconut water competitor. Using lab enzymes, he rapidly ages two varieties of Thai bananas — one for flavor and one for aroma — and extracts the juices to make a naturally pinkish drink with a pronounced banana flavor. Banagua, which he introduced last year, can be found at more than 3,500 stores

More than 139 million metric tons of them are grown worldwide each year. Banana is in matcha. Banana is in seltzer, soft and hard. Banana is in dairy-free creamer. Banana is in canned water.

across the United States, often beside competing banana-flavored products.

"I don't know if it's being in the bananas business, but they are everywhere I look," Mr. Smithson said. "Even in my dreams."

More than 139 million metric tons of them are grown worldwide each year, making bananas the world's most produced, most consumed fresh fruit. They're reliably predictable, tasting the same in schools, delis and airports. And bananas are a foundational ingredient in vintage desserts like sundaes, puddings and flambéed Fosters.

"In the past, banana seemed like a retro play," said Sarah Sanneh, an owner of Pies 'n' Thighs in the Brooklyn borough of New York, where the banana cream pie is the top seller. "But banana water is from the year 3005."

Banana-flavored snacks, on the other hand, can be polarizing. But what most people know as banana flavor is based on a nearly extinct cultivar, the Gros Michel.

"There was a wild disconnect between anything that was banana flavored and the actual taste of bananas," said Kevin Beary, a bartender at the Bamboo Room in Chicago. "There's something about nailing that fresh banana taste. Everyone prefers it."

"Everyone" includes Mr. Beary, a banana champion who sees his mixology work as correcting a historical injustice. He has created more than a dozen banana-based cocktails over his career, mostly by pulverizing fruit, passing it through a centrifuge and using the clear juice that remains to flavor syrups and spirits. How do they taste?

"Exactly like biting into a banana," he said.

In a sense, America is catching up. This banana-flavored wave began in South Korea, where the fruit has long appeared in popular snacks and drinks. Last year, diners there recorded themselves mixing coffee and banana milk from convenience stores, kicking off a social media trend.

Banana's profile received another lift after Jennie Kim, of the K-pop group Blackpink, preached the Banana Kick gospel on "The Jennifer Hudson Show." After the episode aired in March last year, exports of the snack to the United States jumped by 69 percent.

But this isn't another blip of relevance, said Miriam Aniel Oved of the research company Tastewise, which uses generative artificial intelligence to analyze online menus, recipes and social media impressions.

"We're seeing a reinvention moment for banana," she said.

Banana, Ms. Oved noted, belongs to a shrinking category of "legacy fruits" — cherry, apple, peach and strawberry, for example — that have lost ground to "global flavors," like pandan and ube. Banana pulled ahead, she said, because of its milder flavor and starchy texture, which complements, well, everything.

When Eunji Lee, the owner of Lysée in Manhattan, moved to New York from South Korea, there weren't many modern presentations of banana in fine dining. In 2017, she changed that at Jungsik, which has three Michelin stars. Her Baby Banana, a trompe-l'oeil dessert, inspired a generation of fruit-shaped pastries in New York.

Banana's appeal had always been obvious. "The challenge was making it feel special for everyone else," she said.

At Not as Bitter, a two-year-old cafe in the East Village of Manhattan, banana lattes certainly feel special, outselling

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those made with durian, ube and papaya, said Jeffrey Wang, an owner. The shop's most popular fruit and coffee combination, the Banana Split, is made with housemade coconut milk and banana pulp, a shot of espresso cascading through the cream.

"You have to keep trying new combinations," Mr. Wang said. "Sometimes, the flavor may surprise you."

Sure, some customers are surprised to find a thick pool of baby-food-like banana pulp at the bottom of their coffee, but few protest.

"To be honest," he said, "99 percent of people like bananas."

The comforting resurgence of 'grandma hobbies'

Younger generations drive growing interest in skills like knitting and quilting

BY KATE BRENNAN

"Bachelorette party?" my Uber driver guessed.

I glanced down, searching myself for whatever clue he was referencing. No heart-shaped sunglasses. No feather boa spilling out of my suitcase.

"A lot of people around your age come up to Traverse City for bachelorette parties this time of year," he said, clocking my confusion. "Lots of fun bars on the main street."

"Oh," I said. "No, I'm here for a quilting class."

A beat of silence. "Huh."

Down a wooded road in northern Michigan is Green Door Folk School, which opened in 2024 and offers classes in crafts and pastimes dating back centuries, including but not limited to basketry, bookbinding, papermaking, beekeeping and sock knitting.

When I arrived for the two-day quilt workshop in May, my fellow students, 10 in all, milled around the candy-pink schoolhouse with mugs of tea, making introductions. Most had come from nearby towns; a few, like me, had traveled from farther away, and were staying in Airbnb units on-site. Most were under 35. Millennials and Gen Z make up the majority of Green Door's students.

Younger generations' appetite for hands-on activities — what the internet has labeled "grandma hobbies" — has reached far beyond Michigan. In North Carolina, John C. Campbell Folk School, the oldest folk school in the United States, has a long waiting list for its teen program; just a few years ago, it was struggling to fill all the spots. Ely Folk School in Minnesota has also reported a post-pandemic influx of younger volunteers.

"Grandma hobbies reconnect us to ourselves," said Cal Newport, a professor of computer science at Georgetown University in Washington who writes about technology, focus and productivity. "These activities are hard, in that they require time and concentration to master. But they also offer clear and fulfilling rewards."

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Mari Sanborn, the communications coordinator for the Folk School Alliance, a nonprofit organization that supports folk education across the United States and Canada, said learning handicrafts offers a way to reclaim a sense of community as well as traditional skills.

"It's a way of holding onto things that might one day be lost," she said.

SCHOOLS FOR LIFE

The folk school movement emerged in Denmark in the 1840s, when the educator Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig championed learning rooted in lived experience, rather than rote study. He envisioned "schools for life" that would strengthen rural societies through craftsmanship and lifelong learning. The model spread through Scandinavia, and then to the United States in 1878. Today, more than 100 folk schools operate across the country.

Green Door's founder, Kristina Schnepf, 57, operates the school on a small plot of land owned by Julie Botsford and Dr. James Reznich, a couple in their 60s who run a small farm. Ms. Botsford is a retired pharmacist. Dr. Reznich says he works in "tiny personal ceramics" (i.e., teeth; he's a dentist).

One evening, students wandered the farmland with the couple — petting goats, foraging for mushrooms and pausing to marvel at the smallest discoveries, like wild blueberries growing along the trail.

Susan Luckman, a professor of culture and creative industries at Adelaide University in South Australia and the author of "Craft and the Creative Economy," said that analog pastimes give "a little bit of self-empowerment back in a world that can often feel overwhelming."

"At a very basic level, I think people are looking for something to do recreationally that doesn't involve a screen," she added.

Grandma hobbies are all over the internet. On Instagram and TikTok, users have embraced "WIP Wednesday" (short for "work in progress"), a weekly ritual of sharing updates on projects like knitting and needlepoint. Pinterest searches for beginner sewing projects have quadrupled over the past year, driven largely by users under 34.

"SELF-FORGETFULNESS"

At the start of our quilting class, Libby Schnepf, 27, the marketing director at Green Door (and Kristina's daughter), recited a 19th-century line attributed to Ludwig Schröder, an early folk school pioneer: "Stick your finger down into the soil and smell where you are. This is where the needs of the people are found, which can be different in different times and places."

Mr. Schröder's point was that a folk school should adapt to the changing needs of its community, rather than preserve tradition for tradition's sake. If 19th-century Danes required agricultural education, 21st-century Americans may simply desire a quiet place to make something.

Reviewing a work in progress during a quilting class at the Green Door Folk School in Michigan, above, and displaying the finished items, far left. Left, from left, Green Door's founder, Kristina Schnepf, and her daughter, who is the school's marketing director, Libby Schnepf.

After a brief sewing machine demonstration by Cody Cook-Parrott, the class instructor, students sifted through bins of fabric and fanned out across the property. Some, including Claire Erwin, 30, set up their machines at picnic tables outside.

Ms. Erwin was the first student to enroll in Green Door's inaugural class: wooden spoon carving. She and her fiancé keep coming back for more workshops, despite the fact that she accidentally stabbed herself in the hand.

"Remember I got that infection?" she said to her friend, Maura Fitzgerald, also 30, who laughed and nodded without looking up from her quilt. "I just kept going because I was having so much fun making my spoon." •

My first go at the sewing machine was frustrating. My thread tangled. I ripped out more seams than I finished, fussing over the squares in my checkerboard pattern until they aligned exactly as I wanted.

The next day, when my squares didn't align and my stitches wandered, I decided to let them be. The repetition — needle in, thread through, pull tight — took over, and something else began to quiet: background worries. I could feel my usual mental noise dissolving into the rhythm of the work.

Anne Kirketerp, a Danish psychologist and longtime folk school instructor who wrote a book called "Craft Psychology," calls this phenomenon "meaningful self-forgetfulness."

"When we create something that requires full attention, the part of our brain called 'default mode network' is diminished," Dr. Kirketerp said. "The constant inner noise or negative ruminating thoughts are absent."

She added, "That is what we need desperately."